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*S. H. 1826*

# LECTURES

ON THE

## ESSENTIALS OF RELIGION,

PERSONAL, DOMESTIC, AND SOCIAL.

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BY

**HENRY FORSTER BURDER, M.A.**

AUTHOR OF LECTURES ON THE PLEASURES OF RELIGION.

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TO  
THE REV. GEORGE BURDER;  
AUTHOR OF THE VILLAGE SERMONS,  
AND SENIOR SECRETARY TO THE LONDON MISSIONARY SOCIETY,  
WITH EVERY FEELING OF FILIAL GRATITUDE,  
ATTACHMENT AND VENERATION;  
AND WITH MOST ARDENT DESIRES,  
THAT THE EVENING OF HIS ACTIVE AND USEFUL LIFE  
MAY CONTINUE TO BE ILLUMINED  
BY THE CONSOLATIONS AND THE HOPES OF THAT GOSPEL,  
THE 'ESSENTIALS' OF WHICH HAVE BEEN  
THE CHARACTERISTIC SUBJECTS OF HIS SUCCESSFUL MINISTRY,

**These Lectures**

ARE INSCRIBED

BY HIS AFFECTIONATE SON,

HENRY FORSTER BURDER.



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THE ESSENTIALS  
OF  
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RELIGION.

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LECTURE I.

IN a series of Lectures recently brought to a conclusion, I obtained, my friends, your willing attention to a course of subjects in themselves inviting and attractive—the *Pleasures* of Religion. I now request your attention to another series of subjects which, on the first announcement, may appear less adapted to awaken the feeling of interest in their favour—the *Essentials* of Religion. I trust, however, that your minds are impressed with the conviction, that in religion “the useful is paramount in importance to the agreeable; or rather that the useful should become agreeable, by the very circumstance of its utility.” If you value the ministrations of the Pulpit, not for the purpose of intellectual entertainment, nor for the purpose of pleasurable excitement; but for the sake

of instruction from the word of revealed truth, you will attach no inferior degree of interest to the subjects entitled to be regarded as the *Essentials of Religion*. Under this comprehensive title, it is not my design to enter on a discussion of the *doctrines* which may be pronounced essential to christianity: my object is rather to exhibit and to enforce the *Essentials of Personal and Social Religion*. It is to ascertain and to develop the principles which must reign in the heart, and govern the life, of every human being, who would establish a valid title to the name of christian.

In entering on this momentous investigation, we may be conducted to a satisfactory result, either by ascertaining what it is which man chiefly needs, or what it is which the religion of Christ chiefly requires. Whether we adopt the one process of inquiry or the other, we shall be brought to these important conclusions:—that if man would return to God, against whom he has rebelled, *repentance* is indispensably requisite;—that if man, involved in guilt, would obtain an interest in the gospel of salvation, *faith* is indispensably requisite;—and that if man, polluted by sin, would attain real and endless felicity, *holiness* is indispensably requisite. Thus it appears, that if we would express, in the fewest words, the things which are absolutely essential to personal religion, they may be comprised in this short

summary ;—“ Repentance towards God ;”—“ Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ;”—and “ Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.” The first of these embraces the workings of the mind and the emotions of the heart with which a sinner returns to God ; the second regards the medium through which a return can alone be effected ; and to the third belongs the development of the character arising out of those habits, of mind and heart and life, which indicate the reality and the entireness of the required return. These then are the subjects on the consideration of which we now enter ; and let me beseech you to unite with me in earnest prayer, that the blessing of the Father of mercies may rest upon our researches ; and that, by the illuminating influence of his promised Spirit, we may be guided into all that truth, of which the knowledge is essential to our eternal peace !

Commencing then with the consideration of the first of the subjects specified, let me direct your thoughts to the words of inspiration which you will find, in

ACTS XX. 21.

*Repentance toward God.*

THE pre-eminent importance of the subject announced in these words, sufficiently appears from the frequency, and the emphasis, with which

it is introduced to our regard, in every part of the New Testament. We read, that the substance of John the Baptist's energetic and efficient preaching, was contained in these few words—"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." We are assured by the Lord Jesus Christ himself, that one of the leading designs of his personal ministry, was "to call sinners to repentance." On the authority of an inspired Apostle it is asserted, that "Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance and forgiveness of sins." In accordance with these statements we find in the chapter before us, that when the Apostle Paul, in the presence of the elders of the Ephesian church, was taking a retrospect of his successful ministry, and of the truths which he was divinely instructed to render most prominent, he specifies, as the very first of all,—“Repentance toward God.”—“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you,” said this enlightened teacher, “testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The considerations of principal importance, pertaining to the subject before us, have reference either to the *nature* of Repentance, or to the *motives* which urge to its exercise. To the former of these I *now* request your attention, reserving the latter, with a view to a subsequent discourse.

It is not easy, nor do I think it is important, to draw a line of metaphysical discrimination either between the direct approaches to Repentance, and the workings of Repentance itself; or between those workings of the mind which strictly constitute Repentance, and the effects which are immediately and necessarily produced. Without aiming at this unprofitable accuracy of distinction, I wish rather to trace the stages of that progress, through which the mind of the repenting sinner usually passes, under the influence of the Gospel of Christ, rendered operative and effectual by the power of the Holy Spirit. In all these stages we may trace that process which we might be led to expect, by an attention to the radical meaning, and ordinary acceptance of the Greek terms, employed on this subject by the sacred writers. They denote *a change of mind*; and are designed to indicate a change of mind *towards God*, and especially in reference to sin, as committed against the blessed God. They are employed to signify such a change of mind towards God, as naturally and necessarily produces an entire change of character, and a correspondent change of life. The stages through which this change may be traced are, I conceive, Retrospection—Conviction—Contrition—Confession—and Conversion. The first of these is a change, as it regards the

employment of the thoughts:—the second is a change, as it regards the decisions of the conscience:—the third is a change, as it regards the emotions of the heart:—the fourth is a change, as it regards the acknowledgments of the lips:—and the fifth is a change, as it regards the tenor of the conduct.

Let each of these, in their natural and specified order, engage our consideration.

The *First* is RETROSPECTION.

There should, assuredly, be some resemblance between the recollections of a sinner, and the book of God's remembrance, in which his sins are recorded. "These things hast thou done," saith Jehovah; "but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes."—"Thou shalt remember thy ways and be ashamed."—"If they sin against thee," said Solomon (in his sublime prayer) "and thou be angry with them, yet if they bethink themselves, and repent and return to thee with all their heart, then hear thou their prayer."—"Because he *considereth* and turneth away from his transgression," saith the Lord, "he shall surely live." Thus also, in the beautiful and touching parable of the Prodigal, the abandoned youth, who had so long been heedless and thoughtless, is represented as "coming to himself," by salutary retrospection. He was not "himself" before. He was not

acting under the impulse of a "sound mind." He was the dupe of folly, the sport of Satan, the slave of sin. He scarcely thought at all, and never thought aright. He was intent only on the gratification of the passing moment, neglecting alike the retrospect of the past, and the foresight of the future. Thus is it, alas! with the gay and the giddy world, with the idler and the trifler. Yes, and as it regards the things of highest importance—the concerns of the soul, and of eternity—thus it is also with many a man diligent in his business, and many a man intent on the acquisition of literature and science. Whatever may have been the occupations and habits of the years that are past, the repenting sinner awakes as from a dream. He asks, with a spirit-stirring scrutiny, What have I been doing? To what purpose has my life been hitherto devoted? What object has been attained? For what end was I brought into existence? Am I keeping steadily in view the end designed by my Creator, my Preserver, my Judge? Am I not chargeable with most ungrateful and most criminal forgetfulness of the God who made me, and who requires me, by the primary and essential law of my being, to love him with the best affections of my heart, and to serve him with the best obedience of my life? With all that activity of thought which brings a thousand

images and objects, in rapid succession, before the eye of my mind, have not my thoughts of God and of the Saviour been among the most infrequent, the most indefinite, the most fleeting, and the most unwelcome of all that have ever presented themselves to my regard?

When the mind, which was before inconsiderate, has advanced thus far, it is in a state of decided seriousness. It is disposed seriously to reflect and to inquire; to study the Scriptures and to hear the gospel; to regard the voice of providence, and to listen to the advices of christian friendship. It is well that the mind, which was before dormant and insensible, as it regards its highest interests, is now roused from its torpor, and susceptible of deep impression. But in this state of mind, without further progress, let no one deem it safe to remain. Let no one rest satisfied with this. There are many, it is to be feared, whose only claim to the character of being religious is, that they are distinguished by a serious turn of mind. It is well that they are so—that they have made this degree of progress. It is hopeful. But let such be apprized, with affectionate fidelity, that the hope we are encouraged to entertain of their salvation diminishes in proportion to the lapse of time, without further progress. It is an affecting and an awakening consideration, that many a man who calls



himself a christian, may take credit to himself for no slight degree of seriousness of mind, while there is yet the absence of much that is essential to the exercise of true Repentance.

There is involved in "Repentance toward God,"—

*Secondly*, CONVICTION—or a change of mind, as it regards the *decisions* of the *conscience*, in reference to the commission of sin.

There are two characteristics which distinguish genuine and deep conviction.

The first is, an impressive discovery of the extent and the criminality of the sin committed.

"I was alive," said the Apostle, "without the law once." At no period of his life, was he ignorant of the letter of the law; but he was long a stranger to its spirit. He perceived not the extent of its requirements, and therefore he discerned neither the magnitude nor the multiplicity of his offences. At length, however, when the commandment came with power to his mind, light flashed upon his conscience, and a conviction of the greatness of his sins proved the death of all his pharisaic hopes. "Sin," said he, "revived, and I died." This is a specimen of the ordinary process which terminates in true Repentance. By the light of the divine law, we discover that we are sinners, to a far greater extent of delinquency and guilt than we had ever

before imagined. We stand convicted at the bar of conscience, of sins of omission and defect, as well as of actual transgression; of sins in thought, and sins in heart, and sins in verbal expression, as well as sins in the actions performed. Every period of life, and every relation of life, and every scene of life, both of engagement and of enjoyment, seems now to bear testimony against us, and to produce a fearful catalogue of offences. We are "weighed in the balances, and found wanting." Defective now appear our best performances, our best motives, our best intentions. The further we proceed in the awful task of self-inspection, the more we detect of the evil of our lives, and the deceitfulness, and even "desperate wickedness" of our hearts; while in the very moment that some new development of iniquity appals our trembling minds, the inward monitor is heard to whisper, "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these!"

The second characteristic of deep and genuine conviction is—a persuasion of the unimpeachable equity of God in denouncing and inflicting the punishment of sin.

He who is convinced of sin, by the word and by the Spirit of Christ, is prepared to admit, that God is righteous, but not rigorous, in giving us the law which we have violated—in attaching to that law its awful sanctions, and in actually

inflicting the penalty denounced. He now perceives that the justice of God is not at variance with his goodness; that although awful, it is not unamiable; and that both its requirements and its denouncements are essential to the glory of the divine character, the honour of the divine throne, and the well-being of the universe. He is now convinced that sin is an evil which conspires alike against the honour of the Creator and the happiness of the creature; and that, not in consequence of any arbitrary or unnecessary enactments, but in maintenance of the grand principles essential to all moral government, iniquity must be visited with the punishment deserved. It was under the influence of this conviction, that the Psalmist thus expressed the feelings of his heart:—"Against thee—thee only have I sinned; and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." Instead of impeaching the equity, or even the goodness of God in the punishment of sin, the suppliant is prepared to acknowledge that the heaviest of the divine judgments, even those which extend into an ever-during futurity, would not exceed the demerit of the offender.

To what extent there may be conviction of sin, without true Repentance, it is not easy for us to determine. Certain it is that convictions, to a very considerable degree of apprehension and

alarm, may be produced by the force of conscience, by the influence of early education, and by the impression of afflictive events, even while the heart remains unrenewed. That we may be more competent to attempt the desired discrimination, let us proceed to a further step in our inquiry. It is—

*Thirdly*, CONTRITION, or a change of mind, as it regards the *emotions* of the *heart*, on a view of the extent of our guilt and our ingratitude.

The feelings of contrition, as the word denotes, are the feelings of a bruised and broken heart. The sacrifices which God requires of a sinner, and which he will not despise, are those of “a broken heart and a contrite spirit.” Were we to attempt to distinguish the elements which enter into the workings of contrition, we should, I think, find them to consist of deep distress and deep humiliation, blended with some hope of divine forgiveness. Contrition certainly includes much more than sorrow for sin. There is a sorrow for sin, which cannot be denominated “godly sorrow;” and which does not even lead to the exercise of Repentance. The man who has impoverished himself by folly and extravagance, may display unfeigned and fruitless sorrow for the loss of his fortune. The man whose crimes have made him the inmate of a prison, may deeply lament the consequences of his criminality, and yet no feelings

of penitential compunction may be awakened in his heart. The man whose conscience accuses him of a course of wilful and daring rebellion against God, may dread the future consequences of his transgression, and may look forwards, with appalling dismay, to an appearance before the judgment seat of Christ; and yet his heart may remain a stranger to those emotions of "godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of." Even Judas, in one sense, repented. He reflected on his most flagitious and enormous crime with untold horror; he dreaded its consequences with insupportable anguish; and, goaded on at once by conscience and by Satan, he rushed into the abyss of perdition. Contrast with the repentance of Judas, the repentance of Job. Addressing himself to the God against whom he had sinned, by his lips and by his temper, under the bitter provocation of his misguided friends, he said—"I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." He obtained a discovery of the majesty of God, and he was overwhelmed with a sense of his own insignificance: he obtained a discovery of the holiness of God, and he was oppressed with a sense of his own vileness: he obtained a discovery of the goodness and mercy of God, and the effect was the feeling

of deepest abasement and contrition. Not dissimilar are the feelings attributed to the Publican, when, "smiting upon his breast, and not lifting so much as his eyes to heaven, he said, God be merciful to me, a sinner." So also in every age, but especially under the dispensation of the gospel of Christ, has the "goodness of God" been found to be the grand impulse, as well as the grand directory which "leadeth to repentance."

There are two views of that goodness which have a powerful influence in melting away the icy hardness of the heart, and in producing the tender relentings of a contrite spirit.

The first is, the consideration of the goodness of God, as displayed towards us, during the entire course of our rebellion and provocation.

We plead guilty to the charge of the Most High, that he has "nourished and brought us up as children, but that we have rebelled against him." We are constrained to acknowledge, that he has united all the authority of a Sovereign with all the bounty of a generous Benefactor, and all the kindness of an affectionate Father. To Him we feel that we are indebted for every faculty we have misimproved, for every enjoyment we have abused, for every hour we have mispent, and for every opportunity of gaining or of doing good which we have neglected. Bitter are our regrets and keen our self-upbraidings, when we

think, that we have withheld our love from Him to whom we owe our best affections, and refused obedience to those commands which are "holy, and just, and good;" and committed the two greatest evils which it was possible for us to commit, by "forsaking the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to ourselves cisterns—broken cisterns, which can hold no water."

The second view of the divine goodness, which is powerful in awakening contrition, is the consideration of the love of God, as displayed in his unspeakable gift, and in the overtures of the gospel of his grace.

In such a state of mind as that now described, Oh what new and intense emotions are produced by the assurance, that "Christ died for the ungodly!" With grateful astonishment we read in the word of truth, that "God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us!" Well prepared do we now feel to regard it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, not excepting the very chief. And was it for sinners such as I, we are ready individually to exclaim, that the Son of God incarnate laboured, and suffered, and wept, and agonized, and died? Was it for the unworthiest of the unworthy, and the vilest of the vile, that he endured the cross, despising the shame?

Was it the very purpose of his life and ministry to call sinners to repentance, and to seek and save them that were lost? Has he been calling me, with all the authority and all the beseechings of his holy word; and have I remained year after year insensible and unmoved? Has my character presented to the eye of Him that searcheth the heart, a compound of unbelief and obduracy and ingratitude and carnality? Was my daily occupation, to all appearance, that of "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" And notwithstanding all this, have I been spared, that time might be given me for repentance? And with Him who has spared me in the riches of his forbearance, is there still forgiveness, and even plenteous redemption? "I will arise then, and go to my Father," and say, Father I have most awfully sinned against thee, and am not worthy to be received as thy child, or even to be treated as thy servant; yet, for thy name's sake, pardon my iniquity, and for the sake of thy beloved Son, who gave his life a ransom for many, blot out my transgressions. It is a prayer against which his ear is never closed; for the promise is recorded, and must be fulfilled—"He that believeth on the Son of God shall never perish, but have everlasting life."

True and unfeigned Repentance involves,



*Fourthly, CONFESSION.*

The change of mind and heart will be indicated by the penitential acknowledgments of the lips. Previously to the exercise of true Repentance there was a disposition to enter on self-defence and self-justification; but now the effort and the desire are entirely abandoned. With the patriarch of Uz, the repenting sinner is prepared to exclaim—"If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: should I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.—If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me. For he is not a man as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment—If he contend with me, I cannot answer him one of a thousand." With these feelings of abasement, he imitates the example of that penitent, of deeply humbled spirit, who said—"I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me." There is an accordance between his newly-acquired habits of thought and feeling, and the sentiments thus expressed by the disciple whom Jesus loved: "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us: if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

It is of no small importance to entertain clear views of the character of those confessions which indicate true Repentance.

They are *comprehensive, entire, and unreserved*. The heart is laid open. The conscience seeks relief from its burden, by an acknowledgment of all that has been evil, with all its peculiar aggravations. There is an end of all dissimulation, all concealment, all reserve. There is a conviction, that were any single sin intentionally passed over, because still indulged, it would vitiate the whole acknowledgment, and nullify the entire act of confession.

They are *minute and particular*. General confessions will not satisfy the convictions and lamentations of a contrite heart. That which once appeared too trivial to be attentively regarded, and too venial to be severely censured, is now viewed under an aspect of turpitude, which may well call forth the grief of the soul and the confession of the lips. If the minuter acknowledgments belong not to the hour of *social* prayer; they will, at least, give a character to the exercise of *retired* devotion. They will bear some resemblance to the particular and detailed confessions of Nehemiah, and David, and Daniel; and, like theirs, they will be the effusions of a prostrate spirit, in deepest self-abasement.

Genuine confessions will extend to *the evil of*

*our nature, as well as to the evil of our lives.* Sinful actions being traced to evil inclinations, of which the heart is the seat, there will be the most humbling confessions of the entire depravity and awful corruption of our nature. The polluted streams will be traced to the polluted fountain. Instead of any disposition to boast that there is, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, real goodness of heart, there will be such a detection of its impurity, as will extort the most explicit and the most lamenting acknowledgment of its sinfulness. The declaration of Jehovah will not be deemed too humiliating to become the confession of the sinner—"that the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Confessions such as these are not only *required* by the God whom we have offended, but are obviously and unquestionably *due* to the glory of his holy name. "Give glory to God," said Joshua to Achan, "and make confession to him." If, then, there was a requirement of confession, even without any promise of forgiveness, how much more powerful is the inducement to penitential acknowledgment under the hope of pardon! If confession be due to the justice which condemns us, how obviously is it due to the patience which has tolerated us, and to the mercy which encourages our hopes of the remission

of our numberless iniquities! Let us then take the station which belongs to us, and adopt the language which correctly describes us, and place ourselves in the attitude, in which alone we can expect to receive favours from Him against whom we have ungratefully rebelled. Thus will the confessions of our lips give still greater intensity to the emotions of our hearts; and at the throne of Him who delighteth in mercy, we shall feel more deeply than ever, that unto us there must of necessity belong shame and confusion of face!

There belongs to the Repentance required of the sinner,

*Fifthly*, CONVERSION, or that entire change of character which is indicated by a correspondent change of conduct.

By Conversion is to be understood an entire turning from sin to God, with determined and unhesitating decision. This might, in strict accuracy, be distinguished from Repentance; but it is distinguishable only, as an inseparable concomitant, or an immediate result. It is subsequent in the order of nature, but separated, by no perceptible interval, in the order of time. In the language of the *Assembly's Catechism*, it is included in the nature of Repentance. In that form of sound words, Repentance is defined—"a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sins, and apprehension of the mercy

of God in Christ, doth, with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto God, with full purpose of, and endeavours after, new obedience." As sin is the *turning* of the soul *from* God, so conversion is the *returning* of the soul *to* God; and without this it is certain, that there can be no true Repentance. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."—"I have sent thee," said the Saviour to his servant Paul, "to open men's eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God:" and the Apostle himself, in explaining to Agrippa the object of his ministry, declared it to be—"that the Gentiles might repent and turn to God, and do works meet for Repentance." The *sorrow* for sin which enters into contrition will excite the *hatred* of sin which will be displayed by *conversion*. Let sin be truly hated, and it will then be resolutely abandoned, and habitually dreaded. For offences committed against our fellow-creatures, there will be the desire and the endeavour to make restitution, whenever this appears practicable. If any have been injured in their property, or in their reputation, or in their principles, or in any of their interests, there will be a determination, to the very utmost, to repair the

injury, or to counteract the evil, whatever sacrifice it may require, whatever degree of self-denial it may exact. With regard to the blessed God, against whom, indeed, all our transgressions have been committed, the repenting sinner will feel, that no compensation can be attempted; but that immense as is the debt he has contracted by his omissions and offences, he has absolutely nothing to pay. He finds himself entirely without resources and without a plea, till hope dawns upon his contrite spirit from the substitution of the sinner's Surety, and the sinner's Saviour. But from a believing and admiring view of that very substitution of the "just for the unjust," instead of gathering encouragement to the indulgence of sin, he derives his most stimulating incentives to the practice of holiness. The love of Christ is now the grand impulse he obeys; and that love constrains him to live no longer to himself, adding iniquity to iniquity, "but to him who died for him and rose again,"—"that being made free from sin, and become a servant to God, he might have his fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

The subject on which our thoughts have been now employed, has required us to be chiefly occupied with explanation and discussion. It is not, however, to be dismissed, without a serious and affectionate appeal to those heart-awakening

motives to the exercise of Repentance, which arise out of the gospel of Christ. The exhibition of these powerful incentives will claim your attention in a subsequent discourse; but I cannot conclude the present address, without suggesting and enforcing a few reflections.

1. There is reason to fear that many mistake a spurious for a genuine Repentance.

I have not adopted the distinction made by some, between a legal and an evangelical Repentance; because it is the operation of the divine law upon the conscience, which prepares the mind for the reception of the gospel. The operation of the law, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, produces conviction of sin; and the operation of the gospel of Christ produces contrition of heart. But if the views which it has been my object to convey, are correct and scriptural, then Repentance is far more comprehensive in its character, than many have been accustomed to suppose. It is not uncommon to say of a man, "he goes on sinning and repenting." The statement is, I conceive, objectionable. He has never once exercised "Repentance unto life;" for if he had, sin would have become the object of his hatred, and would have been resolutely abandoned and renounced. Let it then be impressed upon every heart, that *he* remains a stranger to true Repentance, who gives no practical evidence of true

conversion to God. It is not uncommon to hear it said of a man, "he is a true penitent." But the question is, whether his sorrow for sin be of the nature which leads to a further and complete change of mind, and heart, and character; or whether it be the "sorrow of the world," which often subsides without inducing any permanent effect, and which sometimes, alas! even "worketh death."

2. We should be most deeply anxious to ascertain, whether we ourselves have exercised that "Repentance to salvation, which needeth not to be repented of."

We have seen that there are several stages in the progress of Repentance, through all of which it is essential that we ourselves should pass. Let us retire and reflect, and scrutinize our hearts, as in the sight of Him to whose inspection they are every moment subjected; and let us be solicitous to ascertain whether, in the workings of our minds, in the movements of our hearts, and in the course of our conduct, we can trace—serious consideration of our way of life; strong conviction of the evil of the sins committed; genuine and heartfelt contrition; humble, penitential confession, and true conversion to God. It is more than possible, that serious and reasonable doubts may arise in the minds of some I now address, whether, if all this be requisite to Repentance, they have ever



yet repented. Conscience, instead of quieting their apprehensions, awakens their fears. To such then I would say, let Repentance *now commence*, in its true and genuine character. Examine your hearts, as well as your actions. Bring them to the test of the holy law. And when constrained to exclaim, "God be merciful to me a sinner," direct your views to the atoning Saviour, the great and the accepted propitiation for sin. His blood cleanseth from guilt of deepest dye; and his overtures of mercy are proclaimed to the vilest offenders. Forget not the value and the necessity of the influences of that Holy Spirit, who can introduce light into the darkest mind, and tenderness of feeling into the hardest heart. A new heart can Jehovah give you, and a new spirit can he put within you; he can take away the heart of stone, and give a heart of flesh.

3. Let it be remembered, that many of those operations and emotions which are involved in true Repentance, christians themselves have occasion to exercise throughout the whole of their lives.

In one sense indeed, as is intimated by our Saviour, just or righteous persons "need no Repentance." They who have already exercised "Repentance unto life," and experienced the entire change, which is introductory to salvation,

do not again need, as others, the entireness of a moral transformation. But if Repentance include among its essential elements and inseparable concomitants, contrition and confession, where is the christian that needs not its daily exercise, under some, at least, of its characteristic modifications? Where is the man, inhabiting this world of iniquity, who "doeth good and sinneth not?" Now it is not only after gross offences like that of Peter, who denied his Lord, that Repentance is necessary, but after every sin without exception. Every species and every instance of defect and of transgression should become the occasion of grief, and humiliation, and confession, before God, and of immediate recourse to the "fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness."—"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us:—If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is also the propitiation for our sins." To the cross of Him who died for sinners, let us then perpetually direct our regard, mourning over our ingratitude, yet rejoicing in our Saviour, and looking, with glad anticipations, to the world in which we shall have no sin to confess, no evil to lament, no corruption to resist; but where all within us, as well as all around us, will be purity and peace and blessedness eternal. Happy

then are you, and most grateful should you ever feel to the God of all grace, if you have exercised that Repentance which is to salvation, and which needeth not to be repented of. If you are still destitute of this indispensable requisite of personal religion, Oh that you may this day give occasion of benignant delight to those adoring inhabitants of heaven, who rejoice with joy unspeakable "over one sinner that repenteth."

## LECTURE II.

### MOTIVES TO REPENTANCE.

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#### ACTS III. 19.

*Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.*

IN a former discourse I endeavoured to exhibit the nature of true Repentance, and to trace the stages through which the mind of the repenting sinner passes, on emerging “out of darkness into light.” These stages of its progress are so many gradations of that entire change of mind which the term, rendered Repentance, is employed to denote. They were specified in five words,—Retrospection—Conviction—Contrition—Confession and Conversion. The first was shewn to be a change as it regards the employment of the thoughts—the second, as it regards the decisions of the conscience—the third, as it regards the emotions of the heart—the fourth, as it regards the acknowledgments of the lips, and the fifth, as it regards the course of the life.

Beyond all doubt, it is of high importance to entertain correct and scriptural views in

reference to the nature of true repentance; but accuracy of conception on the subject is not of itself sufficient. It is necessary, not only that we know in what Repentance consists, but that we actually exercise that Repentance which is "unto salvation, and which needeth not to be repented of." Whenever the Apostles proclaimed the glad tidings of salvation, they invariably urged their hearers to repent, and enforced the most powerful motives to the exercise of Repentance. With "the word of their testimony," then, and the record of their proceedings for our guidance, and with the hope of that influence of the Holy Spirit, to which they owed all their success, let our attention be now directed to the great inducements to the exercise of Repentance which the gospel presents to our hearts.

Be it then considered,

FIRST, That *the imperative command of God requires us to exercise Repentance.*

Without one single exception in the mass of this world's inhabitants, "God now commandeth all men every where to repent." And does not the reasonableness of that requirement at once commend itself to our minds? Are we not all rebellious and apostate creatures, alienated in heart from God, and demonstrated to be "enemies by wicked works?" Have we not been criminally disaffected to the Author of our being,

both as the Sovereign Ruler, and as the Supreme Good? Have we not withheld from him both the obedience due to his authority, and the love due to his infinite excellencies? Of this disaffection, then, this disloyalty, this enmity, he calls us and commands us to repent. He requires an entire change of mind and feeling, of views and sentiments, in reference to his character and his claims; and he cannot but require it. He cannot waive the demand. At our peril we disregard the injunction, or even for a single moment postpone the act of obedience.

And while this command is undeniably reasonable, is it not also replete with encouragement? No such command is given to the fallen angels. Never went there forth from the throne of Him "that liveth for ever," a command that devils should repent. Whence then arises the difference? The answer is obvious. Apostate angels were never required to repent, and to return to their allegiance, because there was never any design to restore them from ruin, by the exercise of forgiving mercy. To us, on the contrary, the command is given, because for us is provided "a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord!" Obey, then, O sinful man, this reasonable and encouraging command. Draw near the throne of the heavenly grace and say—"O thou who art the best of beings, and who hast on my heart the strongest claims, I

confess, I lament the baseness of my apostasy and the awful corruption of my heart. Most anxiously I desire to return to thee from whom I have revolted, through the Lord Jesus Christ, the blessed and only Mediator, the gift of thine unspeakable love. Meekly and submissively would I acknowledge and obey the authority against which I have rebelled; and, repenting in dust and ashes, I implore thy forgiving mercy. To thee I now yield myself in body and soul and spirit; and in thy favour, which is better than life, would I henceforth seek my happiness!"

SECONDLY,—*It is the unalterable determination of God, that without Repentance there shall be no salvation.*

To us, without exception, may be applied the words which the Lord Jesus Christ himself addressed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It might have been supposed, that such a declaration from the lips of him who came to save sinners, and who will hereafter come to judge the world, would sink deep into every heart, and excite universal solicitude. Yet it is with sinners now, as it was with the first transgressors, who listened to the father of lies rather than to the God of truth, and gave credit to those words of seducing falsehood—"Ye shall not surely die." They flatter themselves, that if they have faults,

they have also excellencies; that if they have defects, they have also redeeming qualities; so that they may discharge from their minds all terrific apprehensions of being sentenced to "go away into everlasting punishment," in company with the immoral and the profane. But, Oh, thou who art still impenitent, let not a deceived heart delude thee to thy perdition; let not the enemy of thy soul seduce thee to thy ruin. It is the Son of God himself who has said—"Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Rests thy hope for eternity on the fallacious and criminal supposition, that his words are wanting in truth? Is there, in his direct and explicit assertion, that which appears improbable, or unreasonable? Consult thine understanding, and say whether, without Repentance, there can be any fitness for the enjoyment of salvation, or any ground on which to build a hope of admission to its felicities? Canst thou expect to secure an entrance into heaven, retaining all thy disaffection towards its Sovereign, and those very propensities of mind and heart, which have given origin to all the iniquities of thy past life? Can there be tolerated in that world either positive aversion, or cold indifference, towards Him whom all heaven adores and loves, under the name and title of "the Lamb that was slain?" Will there ever be found within the precincts of the celestial



city, a being of our race, destitute of all sense of obligation to Him who has redeemed his people by his most precious blood? Deceive not then thyself any longer, nor suffer thyself to be deceived. Take warning from the emphatic and express assertion of the compassionate Redeemer, and connect with it the spirit-stirring address of the meekest of men to the ancient people of Israel:—"Take heed, lest there should be among you man or woman, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart."

THIRDLY, *The mercy of God revealed in the gospel, is admirably calculated to bring sinners to Repentance.*

It is the representation of the enlightened Apostle of the Gentiles, that "the goodness of God leadeth to Repentance." Authority may require it; and justice may display, before the eye of the offender, the fearful consequences of refusal; but goodness has a power of affecting the heart, which seems to transcend, in its attractive force, the influence of every other attribute of Deity. Nor is this surprising. The evil, be it remembered, which is to be overcome, is

disaffection of mind, and hardness of heart, and habitual insensibility towards the blessed God. What then has the most direct tendency to counteract and to subdue that evil, but the manifestation of love divine? "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."—When we were yet sinners, and enemies to God, Christ died for us.—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth," said the Saviour, "will draw all men unto me; and this he said, signifying what death he should die." Oh, how great the power—the attractive power—of that cross on which the Redeemer bled and died! How many, once obdurate in heart, have looked, and wondered, and wept, and prayed, and repented, and believed! They have looked on him whom by their sins they had pierced, and felt the bitterness of that "godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of." A discovery of the love of Him who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, has melted their hearts into tender relentings, and produced unfeigned contrition of spirit. Instances of this entire and saving change have been presented, in the character of many who were previously among the most thoughtless, the most dissipated, and the most impious of our race. Such have been the triumphs of the gospel in our own

country, and in every other country, in which there has been faithfully and feelingly proclaimed the doctrine of Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Many are the regions recently illumined, in which specimens of repentant heathen, "turning from dumb idols to serve the living God," have augmented the blessedness of those benignant spirits who rejoice "over one sinner that repenteth." And shall not we rejoice in the thought, that very many are now the occasions, on which the tears of deep contrition roll down the swarthy or the sable cheeks of our brethren of far-distant tribes, till lately involved in darkness the most profound, and characterized by death-like apathy of soul? May such instances, and such scenes, be witnessed to the very remotest extent of human habitations!

FOURTHLY, *The most gracious reception, on the part of God, is ever given to the repenting and returning sinner.*

"Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly

pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." Can any intimations be more cheering to the contrite heart, than those which the merciful Redeemer himself conveyed in his most touching parable of the Prodigal? After a course of folly and profligacy, the abandoned youth at length came to himself; and some faint hope of forgiveness springing up in his heart, he resolved to cast himself, with penitential acknowledgments, at his father's feet, humbly asking the most servile station in his family. "And he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.—And said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The picture is not overcharged, vivid as is the colouring. You see in it, the compassionate Friend of sinners—the Saviour of the lost—pourtrayed to the very life. Forget not, that the heart of love, which dictated that parable, retains, at this moment, all its tenderness.

What then is to be expected from his mercy, exalted as he is for the express purpose of granting "Repentance and remission of sins." Fear not; thou shalt not be rejected, O thou weeping, doubting, trembling suppliant at his throne. Do thy sins appear to thee too great to be forgiven? Does thy Repentance appear too slight to be accepted? Be of good courage. He extends to thee "the golden sceptre." Boldly then draw near. His language is, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out." In relying on his word of faithful promise, there is no hazard of disappointment. His heart echoes the invitations of his lips. He loves the unlovely, and gave himself for the unworthy, and laid down his life for the ungodly; and is now both able and willing "to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

FIFTHLY, *With the exercise of true Repentance, salvation is invariably connected.*

Let it not, for a moment, be imagined, that Repentance can be of the nature of an atonement for sin; or that there can be in it any intrinsic value, on which there may be established a plea for pardon. The supposition is perfectly incompatible with the character of Repentance, and

with the circumstances of the repenting sinner. What can be more dissimilar than penitence and innocence? What can be more incongruous than the acknowledgment of iniquity and the claim of conscious or imaginary merit?

There is, however, an intimate and inseparable connexion between Repentance and salvation. It is a connexion established by an economy of pure and sovereign grace. True Repentance is in every instance, "Repentance unto life." It has, for the present world, the promise of forgiveness; and for the world to come, the assurance of eternal salvation. In the cheering and animating injunctions which the Lord Jesus gave to his disciples after he had risen from the dead, the connexion is exhibited under circumstances of peculiar encouragement. He directed that "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem." In full accordance with his Master's will, the Apostle Peter, on the day of Pentecost, thus replied to the anxious inquiry, "What shall we do?"—"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In the same strain, the same Apostle addressed the people of Israel at the gate

of the Temple, on the occasion to which our text refers:—"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."

It cannot then admit of a doubt, that every sinner, who truly repents, attains the blessedness of the man "whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." He is then blessed indeed! He enters on the enjoyment of the purest and most permanent delight. "He shall never come into condemnation: he is passed from death unto life," and he is an authorised expectant of the felicity of that world, "where there is fulness of joy; where there are pleasures for evermore." Has such a state of security and of privilege no attractions for *you*? In any other state on earth, can there be happiness which deserves the name? Can guilty man be happy without the hope of forgiveness; or can he, without most pitiable infatuation, entertain that hope, in the absence of true Repentance?

But are there no instances, it may be asked, in which Repentance is disconnected with salvation? Not one,—it may be replied, with firmest confidence. No exception can be alleged, even with regard to the sin pronounced unpardonable. It is said of those who, by the righteous determination of God, are excluded from forgiveness, that "it is impossible to renew them again unto

Repentance;" but it is by no means said, that Repentance, were it exercised, would be unavailing. No, the tremendous state of such is, that by the just judgment of God, they are left to the awful effects of their own obduracy and impenitence. Were it possible that they should repent, it is certain that on repenting they would be forgiven. Think, then, how great is the encouragement arising from the fixed and invariable connexion which the God of all grace has established between Repentance and salvation. Let it only appear that you have, in your hearts and lives, the evidences of true Repentance, and you are warranted to yield yourselves to the bliss-inspiring persuasion that your sins are forgiven, and that your souls shall be eternally saved.

SIXTHLY, *The grace necessary to the production of true Repentance, God is ever ready to bestow.*

"I admit," some one may be disposed to say, "that Repentance is a duty binding upon all men, and unquestionably imperative upon me. I feel that I am daily contracting additional guilt, by remaining in impenitency and unbelief; but how shall I be able to exercise that Repentance which needeth not to be repented of? You tell me, and I believe and feel it to be true, that my nature is depraved, and that my heart is both obdurate and deceitful; how then shall I repent?"



It is my happiness to remind you, that the Lord Jesus Christ, who “died for our offences, and was raised again for our justification,” is “exalted by the right hand of God to be a Prince and a Saviour, for *to give Repentance*” in order to “the remission of sins.” This part of his mediatorial undertaking precisely meets your case, and corresponds with your most pressing exigence. He communicates the grace necessary to that exercise of Repentance, which his word requires, by giving his Holy Spirit to effect deep conviction of sin, and true contrition of heart. He thus fulfils that gracious promise of a former dispensation:—“A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them.”—“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born.” If then you have discovered the guilt and danger of continuing in impenitence, and if you deeply lament the hardness and coldness of your hearts towards God, you will attach to

these encouraging promises the highest value; you will plead them most earnestly and perseveringly at the throne of grace; and certain it is that you will not thus plead in vain. He who never gave encouragement to an unfounded expectation, has said—"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for, if ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him!"

SEVENTHLY, *The Repentance of a sinner is the occasion of benevolent rejoicing both on earth and in heaven.*

To christian friends, and christian parents, and christian ministers, well may it be an occasion of joy and praise, if they, "over whose souls they have watched," in the prospect of giving an account, present indications of true Repentance. Well may they rejoice on finding, that they have not "laboured in vain, nor spent their strength for nought;" that they have been honoured as "workers together with God," or rather that their feeble instrumentality has been crowned with divine efficiency; and that, when they have addressed the ear, the Spirit of God has opened the heart, and renewed the mind; imparting to the intellect the light of life, and diffusing through the soul the fire of love. Well may

they rejoice, for they assuredly know, "that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

But the joy produced by causes such as these, is not confined to the regions, which are the immediate scene of these glorious events. The Repentance of a single individual of our race, however obscure and undistinguished by adventitious circumstances, constitutes an article of intelligence, sufficiently important, to be transmitted to the world above, and circulated as an occasion of extatic delight and adoring praise, through the mansions of celestial blessedness. The interest it excites is not peculiar to beings of our own ransomed race. No, the Lord of paradise assures us, that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth." Knowing, as these benignant seraphs know, the value of a soul immortal, and of joys eternal, we wonder not that heaven should echo with their rapturous hallelujahs, while they rejoice over the repentant sinner. Could you conceive adequately of their joy, you would be better prepared to form some conception of the still higher delight of Him whom angels adore, and who came from heaven to earth, for the express purpose of "seeking and saving them that were lost." It was to describe

his own feelings of compassionate love and complacential delight, that he who calls himself the "good Shepherd," and who "laid down his life for his sheep," delivered the three distinct but harmonizing parables of inimitable pathos, recorded in the fifteenth chapter of the Gospel according to Luke:—the parable of the lost sheep—the parable of the lost piece of silver—and the parable of the long-lost son. Read and study these, with an attentive mind, and surely your hearts "will burn within you," while you contemplate the Son of God—the Lord of angels—the Sovereign of the universe—rejoicing with joy ineffable, over "one sinner that repenteth!" Oh what must be the love of his heart—what must be the value of one human soul! The simple fact speaks a volume of instruction—a volume of encouragement! Are any of you still impenitent? And can you any longer retain the feelings of indifference with regard to that essential change, which, were it to take place in your heart, would, on the very ground of your incipient happiness, be an occasion of joy to the Son of God? Or can you imagine, that the exalted Redeemer can be reluctant to grant you the grace requisite to Repentance, when the exercise of Repentance would be to himself an occasion of high delight? Or can you suppose it possible, that he should be unwilling to receive you

on repenting, when every instance of contrition is an accession to his joy and his glory? In whatever aspect you view this disposition of the heart of Jesus, see what encouragement it suggests—what incentives it presents and urges. You would not be an indifferent spectator of the joy even of a little child; but as the joy of a man of mature mind may be supposed superior in its nature, and in its source, to infantine delight, so may the joy of an angel, exulting in wisdom, be deemed superior to that of man, and the joy of the Son of God superior to that of angels. Conceive, then, if you can, of the elevation and intensity of *his* delight, and let your loftiest conception, inadequate as it still must be, operate with all the power of a moving and exciting principle, upon your inmost soul!

And now, to deepen the impression, be it remembered, that He who in heaven rejoices over the sinner that repents, on earth shed tears of compassionate lamentation over such as retained their impenitence. He wept over Jerusalem, not because it was about to be the scene of his own unparalleled sufferings, but because the obduracy of its inhabitants was about to bring down upon their devoted city the severest and most tremendous judgments. Think of the import of the words which accompanied those tears of ill-requited love;—"Oh that thou hadst known,

at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now are they hidden from thine eyes!" Think of the import of those tears:—how much they expressed—how much they portended! The eyes which they suffused could see into the deep depravity of the human heart, into the remote futurity of another world, and into all the indescribable realities of death and judgment, of hell and heaven! Sinner, dost thou not read in those tears the dreadful nature of the guilt thou art contracting? If the goodness of God lead thee not to Repentance, art thou not "treasuring up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God?" Dost thou not discern in those tears of the Redeemer, the sorrows of slighted love and despised compassion? Do they not stream forth from a contemplation of the invariable laws of heaven, and the tremendous terrors of insulted justice, when mercy has been disregarded and contemned? Dost thou not discover in those tears the sincerity of the Saviour's love, and the greatness of his unequalled compassion? He who shed these tears was about to shed his blood, and to pour out his life as a sacrifice for sin. Can thine heart, then, still retain its cold insensibility? Wouldst thou be found amongst those over whom the Redeemer wept with tears of disregarded pity, or amongst

those over whom he rejoices with divine, ineffable delight?

You are ready to admit, perhaps, that a state of impenitence is a state both of guilt and of danger. You hope that, sooner or later, you may repent. You even resolve that before long you will, if possible, exercise Repentance. At all events, you hope that your Repentance will be sincere, in the immediate prospect of death and of eternity. What! do you calculate on securing the best opportunities, and the best facilities for the exercise of Repentance, on the bed of death? Who can tell whether your death may not be sudden, and even without the previous warning of one single moment? Who can tell whether the powers of intellect may not be pitifully enfeebled? Who can tell whether pain of body may not be so violent and unremitted, as to produce an awful disqualification for efforts of the mind and heart, on the neglected concerns of salvation? Who can tell the agonies of soul, and the upbraidings of conscience, and "the fearful looking for of judgment," which may give a character of horror to the death-bed scene of such as defer, for the present, the exercise of Repentance unto life? An eye-witness of such a scene, and one of recent occurrence, has put into my hands a heart-affecting narrative, from which I will extract a few passages, with a

view to exemplify, by facts, the most awakening, the sentiments I have been endeavouring to enforce. The individual whose death is described, had been educated with religious care, but had long endeavoured to banish from his mind all the recollections which served but to embitter a course of sin and folly. At length, however, with "the King of Terrors" in full view, he could banish those recollections no longer.—"No words," says the writer, "can express the agony and distress in which we found him. All his remaining strength, both of body and mind, was now called forth in the most agonizing cries for mercy, and in condemnations of his own character and conduct. 'You are now brought,' said the writer, 'to a dying bed; what do you think of Christ? What do you think of religion now?'—'Think! (said he, stretching out his arms,) I think there is nothing else in all the world; they are every thing, every thing! Will Christ save me? Will he save me? I have taken the wrong road. Oh! what a fool have I been, to squander away my precious time in vanity and sin; and now I have but a few hours to live, and every thing to be done!—And now I cannot get a moment's rest, to think with calmness on my situation; I cannot be still, I cannot be calm. Lord, have mercy upon me! Christ, have mercy upon me! Save me, or I perish!' His agonies



increasing, he looked upon us from side to side, and said, 'Cannot you help me?—Ah! it is hard work—hard work—and with a guilty conscience too. Oh, talk to me of Christ; there is not a moment to be lost; in a few hours I shall be gone for ever.—Oh, what would I now give for a few calm hours, to think on my state, and to prepare for my great change! Oh Lord! grant me six hours—six hours is all I ask; six calm hours! Oh, I would give hundreds of thousands to possess but six hours!—May I hope in Christ? Am I not too bad?'—'No,' said the writer; 'he saves the very chief of sinners, and saves to the uttermost all that come to God by him.' His voice now began to falter; but he continued to cry, in tones weaker and weaker, 'Lord, have mercy—Christ, have mercy on me—save me, or I perish!' till he closed his eyes, and breathed his last."

Who can resist the impression of such a recital? Who, in the possession of his thinking powers, would not recoil with terror from the thought of such a Repentance as this? It is true the heart-rending narrative precludes not a degree of hope. We cling to the hope, that there was not only intense distress, but also some degree of that sorrow "which worketh Repentance unto salvation." But even on the most favourable supposition which it is possible for us to entertain,

who would not tremble and turn pale, at the thought of such a Repentance as this? I beseech you then, by the horrors of such a scene, by the momentous realities of an eternal world, and especially by the tender mercies of a compassionate Redeemer, still waiting to be gracious, that you neglect not another day the great salvation; that you delay not another hour a repentant and believing application to that friend of sinners, who has said—and has authorised you to interpret his expressions and his disposition by his tears,—“Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

## LECTURE III.

### THE NATURE OF FAITH.

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ACTS xx. 21.

#### *Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.*

So intimate is the connexion between "Repentance toward God, and Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ," that it would be difficult to trace, with entire accuracy and precision, the boundaries which separate the one from the other. Nor would less difficulty be found in the question, sometimes agitated with polemical acumen—Whether Repentance or Faith be first in point of time, in the history of divine operations on the mind of man. The fact is, that their actings are inseparably blended; and each sustains to the other, by a series of reciprocal influences, the relation both of cause and of effect. Some portion of truth must necessarily be embraced by the mind, in order to the very first elements of Repentance; for, without the operation of such a cause, no rational account can be given of the origin of such a change. By the various and

progressive workings of Repentance, the mind is prepared to embrace more and more of that truth which, before, it rejected with prejudice, or disregarded as wanting in interest. The humbling consciousness of the guilt and danger of our alienation from God, disposes us to believe and to embrace the doctrine of reconciliation by the cross of Christ; and it is in the exercise of this Faith, and in the act of looking on Him whom, by our sins, we have pierced, that we most deeply mourn over our numberless transgressions, and that we more than ever abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes. Thus are the emotions of "Repentance toward God" most intimately and inseparably blended with the exercise of "Faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

The importance of the subject on which we now more particularly enter is, I trust, sufficiently apparent. Should any attach to it only an inferior degree of interest, I entreat their attention to one single sentence which fell from the lips of incarnate Deity :—"He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God."

Such, then, being the magnitude of the subject before us, I wish to present it to your consideration, under several distinct aspects;

each of which is of unquestionable and even of vital importance. I propose to exhibit the nature of the Faith we are required to exercise—its connexion with justification—and its moral influence.

It is to the *first* of these topics—to the NATURE of the Faith which is essential to salvation—that I now invite your regard. In attempting the elucidation of this momentous subject, it shall be my endeavour, FIRST, To ascertain the meaning of the terms employed by the inspired writers, in order to denote the exercise of true and genuine Faith: and SECONDLY, To establish some important principles, in order to guard against the danger of erroneous views and injurious misconceptions.

FIRST, Let our inquiries be directed to the *meaning of the terms* usually employed on this subject by the sacred writers.

Greatly is it to be lamented, that the subject of Faith, instead of being usually elucidated by discussion, has often been involved in deep obscurity. The definitions and distinctions of metaphysical expositors, both from the pulpit and from the press, have produced confusion, rather than clearness of ideas; so that the mind, yielded to their guidance, has been bewildered in the entanglements they have laboriously constructed. In all the inquiries connected with

revealed truth, I have been disposed to view with suspicion and aversion, scholastic refinements and technical subtleties. I find, in the word of God, a luminous and a beauteous simplicity ; and I am encouraged to suppose, that when the inspired writers employ words in common use, they intend such words to be understood in their ordinary sense, unless some intimation be given to the contrary. If they evidently proceed on the supposition, that their meaning is unambiguous, and perfectly intelligible to their readers, even without the necessity of any laboured explanation, I am prepared and authorized to presume, that no peculiar difficulty of interpretation is to be encountered. These remarks appear to me strictly applicable to the subject before us. The sacred writers insist much on the importance of Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ ; but they betray no apprehension of any danger of being misunderstood, in consequence of any difficulty or obscurity in the terms they employ. They evidently proceed on the supposition, that the persons addressed will be liable to no perplexing embarrassment, either in ascertaining what the Faith required really is, or in determining whether, in the true and intended sense of the requirement, they themselves are believers.

Proceeding, then, with these views, to the investigation of the meaning of the important

terms, currently employed on this subject by the sacred writers, we shall find that, in the use of the nouns rendered "faith" and "belief," and in the use of the verb which denotes the act of believing, there is a direct reference, either to a communication made, or to the character and claims of one who makes a communication. If the case relate directly to the communication itself, and it be made in the form of a testimony, a declaration, or a promise, then that which is required of us is simply that we *believe* it;—that is, that we *receive* and *embrace* it, *as undoubted truth*; and, as the natural result of so receiving it, that we yield our hearts to the influence which, from its own nature, it is calculated to exert.

But in some instances the case may relate, not so directly to any one specific communication, as to the character and claims of him through whom various communications have been, or may be made. Let us suppose, for example, that the blessed God reveals himself to some individual of our race, in all the majesty and in all the benignity of his character, and in all his infinite resources for the happiness of his creatures. Let us suppose that his language is, "I am the Almighty, the all-sufficient God; I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." What then is required of that favoured individual? Beyond

a doubt—that he should trust in Him, and rely upon Him with grateful and adoring and most entire affiance. Now it was thus that God did actually manifest himself to the patriarch Abraham; and that venerated servant of the Most High, to his immortal honour, exercised a confidence unsuspecting and unbounded. Two instances of that confidence especially are illustrative of the subject before us.

The first is eulogized in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.”—“When Abraham was called to go out of his own land,” observes Dr. Dwight, “he knew not whether the people among whom he was to reside would prove friends or enemies, kind or cruel; nor whether his own situation, and that of his family, would be happy or unhappy. Wholly uninfluenced by these considerations, and all others, by which men are usually governed in their enterprizes, he still adventured upon an undertaking, in which his own temporal interests, and those of his family were finally embarked. Why did he thus adventure? The only answer to this question is, he was induced to go by a regard to the character of the Being who called him.—The emotion by which he was compelled to



leave his home was *confidence*. God summoned him to this hazardous and important expedition ; and he readily obeyed the summons. The true and only reason was, he confided entirely in the character and directions of God. Such were his views of this glorious Being, that to commit himself and all his concerns to the direction of God was, in his estimation, the best thing in his power. At the same time he experienced an exquisite pleasure in yielding himself to the direction of God."

A second illustration of the nature of Abraham's Faith we find in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. When far advanced in life, a promise was given him of the birth of a son, from whom was to descend, not only a great and powerful nation, but that long-expected Messiah, in whom all nations were to be blessed. " He staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving glory to God ; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised, he was able also to perform ; and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." His faith then was evidently of the nature of *confidence* in the promise of God, arising from confidence in the *character* of God. He placed his reliance on the divine perfections, and therefore he put his trust in the divine assurances. Now this faith of Abraham, be it remembered,

is represented, by the Apostle, as the grand pattern of true and justifying faith, designed for universal imitation. From this leading and striking instance then, of which so much is written in the Old Testament, and so much also in the New, we may conclude, that the Faith which the word of God requires and commends—the Faith which is connected with eternal salvation, is, in its simplest exercise, of the nature of *trust* or *confidence*.

A third illustration of the nature of Faith we may derive from the commencement of our Saviour's valedictory address to his disciples before he suffered. "Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe," or, as the words are more correctly rendered, "believe on God, believe also on me." The meaning appears to be well expressed in the paraphrase of Bishop Hall, approved by the judicious Scott—"Repose the whole affiance of your hearts upon me, the true and only Son of God, whom ye see clothed with flesh." Not only the form of expression employed, but also the explanatory verses which follow, may convince us, that it is to the exercise of unwavering trust and stedfast confidence, that our Lord is urging his disciples. It is as if he had said, "Let not your hearts be dismayed at the thought of my departure, or the view of my sufferings. Put your trust in that God who is my Father and your

Father ; put your trust also in me, his well-beloved Son. Am I not entitled to your confidence ? Can you doubt my love, or my power, or my promise ? In my Father's house are many mansions ; if it were not so I would have told you ; I go to prepare a place for you : and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and take you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." From this representation, then, we conclude, that the Faith which Christ requires to be exercised in himself is of the nature of *trust* and *confidence*.

A fourth illustration we may gather from the last epistle written by the Apostle Paul ; and written in the anticipation of approaching martyrdom. He was then a prisoner ; " nevertheless," said he, " I am not ashamed ; for I know whom I have believed," or rather, as in the margin, " in whom I have *trusted*, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." If we may be permitted to interpret the emotions which the Apostle has concisely expressed, is it not as if he had said : — " The greatest proof of confidence which a human being is capable of exercising, is that of entrusting to the custody of another the guardianship of his deathless spirit, with all the momentous interests of its immortality. It is a deposit which I could not place in the hands of an archangel.

It is by far too precious for any created, any dependent being; for to such cannot belong absolute immutability. But I know in whom I have trusted, and am persuaded that in his hands my soul must be secure. Yes, I have commended my spirit to Him, who, having by himself accomplished the purification of our sins, has taken his seat at the right hand of the majesty on high, angels and principalities and powers being made subject to his authority. The guardian of my soul is He who by his own arm brought salvation, and led captivity captive. In Him I will trust and not be afraid, for Jehovah is his name; He is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation." From this instance, then, we conclude, that the Faith of the illustrious Apostle was of the nature of *trust* and *confidence*.

A fifth illustration of the nature of Faith we may find in the commencement of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. It has been sometimes said, that the first verse of that incomparable chapter does not contain a definition of Faith; and that no statement on this subject, in the form of a definition, is to be found in the whole extent of the Scriptures. Were the verse in question happily translated, it would, I am persuaded, obviously authorize a very different opinion. It has been, as I conceive, correctly rendered in these perspicuous terms:—

“ Now Faith is the *confidence* of things hoped for; the *conviction* of things not seen.” The expression, although not obscure, is, like many others which are distinguished by condensation of meaning, elliptical. A few words appear to have been in the mind of the writer, which he deemed it unnecessary to insert; presuming that even by the unlearned reader, they would be readily supplied. Were the words inserted which seem clearly to be understood, the definition would be expressed in terms to this effect:—  
“ Faith is the confidence of the mind in the testimony of God, with regard to things hoped for; the conviction of the reality and importance of things not seen.”

It is in the form of a testimony that God has made the grand communication of the truth which he imperatively requires us to receive; and on the due reception of which depends our eternal salvation. Now “ if we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; and this is the testimony of God, which he hath testified of his Son:—that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” Why, it may be asked, is the testimony of God pronounced *greater* than the testimony of men, but because there is a greater, that is, a *firmer ground of confidence*, than there can be in any instance of human testimony; and the advantage which

the one has over the other, must obviously and necessarily arise, from the higher character and claims of Him who bears the testimony.

The Faith, then, to which there is ascribed a paramount importance, both in our text, and in the general representations of Scripture, is "faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is, faith in the testimony which God has given respecting his beloved Son, as the Saviour of sinful men. To believe the Gospel of Christ, is to receive and embrace the testimony of God concerning the Saviour, as unquestionably true, unspeakably important, and deeply interesting to ourselves. In other words, it is to cherish a firm and confident persuasion of its truth, and excellence, and importance, on the ground of entire confidence in the character of the blessed God, from whom the gracious communication has been received.

But in order to guard against any misconceptions on this subject of vital importance, and to press upon our own hearts the requisite inquiries, let me, as proposed, endeavour—

SECONDLY, To establish some leading principles of guidance and of caution.

1. In order to the Faith which is essential to salvation, the testimony of God in the gospel must be distinctly understood, in its true meaning and spirit and importance.

A man may profess to believe the gospel of Christ, and may imagine that he believes it, when, in reality, he does not understand its import. He may believe all that his mind discerns in the announcements of the gospel; but there may be so much in those announcements which he does not discern, that it cannot justly be said, he understands it; and not comprehending its import, it cannot justly be said that he believes it. The impression and the persuasion of his mind do not correspond with the whole, but only with a part, and with a very small part, of the truth designed to be conveyed; and therefore the persuasion cherished in his mind falls radically short of being the Faith which the gospel requires. Take, for an example, that concise but comprehensive summary of the gospel, given by the Apostle Paul in his First Epistle to Timothy; —“ It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” This faithful saying has reference to two points of unspeakable importance; the one regards the character of man as a sinner, guilty, depraved, and wretched; the other regards the character of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a Saviour able and willing “to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him.” Now no man can possibly understand aright the latter, without entertaining just views of the

former. No man can, by any possibility, believe on Christ, because no man can, by any possibility, comprehend the character of Christ as a Saviour, who has not right views of the character of man as a sinner. But it is not a vague and speculative view of the nature of sin, or of man as a sinner, which amounts to the requisite perception. Never can I form right views of the evil and danger of sin, till I see, till I feel, *myself* to be a sinner—a sinner odious in the sight of the God of holiness—a sinner ready to perish—a sinner deserving to perish—a sinner absolutely without hope, unless hope dawn upon the mind, from some intimations of unmerited favour and sovereign mercy. Immeasurable is the difference between a man coldly speculating on the abstract nature of sin, and a man entering, with lowliest abasement and contrition, into the views of him who exclaimed, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” In the former there is not only the absence of right feelings, but there is equally the absence of right views. He does not view his character, or his offences, as a sinner ought to view them, or as they really are. He does not understand, and therefore he does not believe, that part of the testimony of God, which regards the nature and evil of sin. How, then, can he believe the other part of the testimony, which regards the character and work of Him, who came into the world to



save sinners? He may read of the Saviour's tender compassion, and atoning blood, and perfect righteousness; but he receives from such statements no such ideas, no such impressions as they were intended to produce. He feels not the absolute necessity of interposing mercy. He discerns not the glory of the gift unspeakable. He yields not to the urgency of the divine be-seechings to be reconciled to God. The glad tidings of salvation, however familiar to his ear, excite no correspondent ideas in his mind, no correspondent emotions in his heart. He may verbally declare an assent to the truths contained in the testimony of God; but it would be a perversion of language, to represent him as actually believing those truths, of which there is no correct impression, either on his understanding, his memory, his conscience, or his heart. Be it, then, our immediate and anxious concern to ascertain, of what character are our own ideas and impressions, on these momentous subjects, in order that we may examine and determine "whether we be in the faith."

2. There may be the belief of many things which have relation to the gospel, when there is not a belief of the gospel itself.

A man may admit the force of the evidences of the divine origin of christianity, and may believe the bible to contain a divine revelation, and

yet not possess the faith of the gospel. He may be much occupied with studying, and with exhibiting, the proofs of the genuineness and authenticity of the books of scripture, while he may be habitually unmindful of their invaluable contents. He may even flatter himself into a persuasion, that he well understands, and cordially believes, the truths which they inculcate, while his mind continues unenlightened, and his heart impenitent and unrenewed.

Again; a man may believe the leading *facts* recorded in the Scriptures, respecting the Son of God, and yet not possess the faith of the gospel. When importance is attached by the sacred writers to the facts concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, it is because they connected together in their minds, and require us to associate in ours, the facts and the doctrines built upon those facts. If the facts be taken alone, detached from their proper bearings upon sentiment and doctrine, they are as the body without the soul. They are inoperative and inefficient. In vain shall I believe that Jesus died and rose again, if my mind imbibe no just views of the character of Him who died, and of the design of his death and resurrection, and of the declarations and promises, in reference to these glorious events, which form an essential part of the testimony contained in the gospel.

“It is possible,” observes Mr. Erskine, “to

believe, not only in the facts, but also in the *system* of christianity as a philosophical theory, and yet be destitute of faith in the truth. One man may be occupied with the metaphysics of religion, as another is occupied with the ceremonies of religion." But the former, no less than the latter, may retain a heart unmoved, unconverted, and unbelieving. The same able writer has observed, that a man may receive many powerful impressions from the *poetry*, as well as from the philosophy of the bible, without believing its substantial truths. There is in the poetry of the bible sublimity unrivalled, tenderness and pathos irresistible. The delight arising from these sources, "is of the same kind as that which a finely strung mind derives from the treasures of Milton's genius; but the truth of the gospel is not in this case the object of belief. The love and justice of God manifested in the cross have not impressed the mind—for their impression could only be joy and gratitude and awe." He, whose admiration is called forth, forgets that he is standing on the verge of an eternal world, and that the word he is admiring for the high qualities of its style, is that by which he must be judged at the last day. He is unimpressed by the testimony of the God of love, and unaffected by the compassionate Redeemer's most tender intreaties. Surely he does not believe, he does not embrace the gospel, as a

communication of heavenly grace. He may read the bible with the feelings of a man of taste, but he reads it not with the views or feelings of a sinner under sentence of condemnation, who finds, in its sacred contents, the way of pardon and peace and joy.

3. Our attention should be directed much more to the grand *objects* of Faith, than to the workings of our own minds in the act of believing.

The supposition, that there is in the nature of Faith much of complexity and intricacy, has led many theologians to invent or to adopt numerous distinctions, in reference to various kinds of Faith. The consequence has been, that those who have wished to guard against self-deception on a subject of such vast importance, have had their minds greatly harassed and perplexed, first in endeavouring to understand these fine-spun distinctions, and then in endeavouring to ascertain whether their faith corresponds with any one of these definitions. Most unhappy has often been the result. The method adopted has had the effect "of drawing the attention away from the thing to be believed, and engaging it in a fruitless examination of the mental operation of believing. And is it not true," asks Mr. Erskine, that we see and hear of more anxiety amongst religious people, about their faith being of the right kind, than about their believing the right

things? Thus they leave that truth which God has revealed and blessed, as the medicine of our natures, and bewilder themselves in a metaphysical labyrinth." Now this does not appear to have been the case with the first christians. They seem to have been perplexed with no such difficulties. When they received the gospel, there was nothing in their views of the nature of Faith, to withdraw their attention from the truths it contained; and those truths, according to their natural tendency, filled their hearts with joy and peace and hope. Let us imitate their example. Let us direct the full energy of our minds and hearts to the wondrous love and finished work and great salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and let us yield our whole souls to the influence of that joy-inspiring and most faithful assurance—"that whosoever believeth on him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

4. We are not to imagine that Faith may be for the present delayed, in the hope of obtaining qualifications for its future exercise.

Faith in the gospel is a duty, at this moment, incumbent on every one of us. The God in whose hands our breath is, and at whose bar we must soon appear, imperatively requires every one of us, without exception, and without procrastination, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. "This is the first and great commandment,"

under the gospel dispensation, "that we believe on him whom God hath sent." The reason is obvious. The things we are required to believe are undeniably true, and infinitely important. They are reported to us on the authority of God himself. They relate to the honour of Jehovah, and to our own interests for a future and eternal world. If we believe them, we are saved; if not, we perish. All that is necessary for our salvation, has been actually accomplished by the doings and the sufferings of the Son of God incarnate. The work of redemption is finished. The sacrifice of atonement has been offered and accepted. The proclamation of mercy has been addressed to us, and we are even intreated to receive it as a faithful announcement, and worthy of our immediate and most cordial acceptance. It is certain, indeed, that you will not receive the testimony concerning the Saviour, and that you will not make a personal and believing application to him for pardon and life, unless you deeply feel your guilt and misery; but surely you are culpable, unspeakably culpable, if you neglect, if you refuse to make that application. Plead not inability as an excuse for that neglect; for the only inability under which any one can labour, is a want of inclination; and assuredly, that want of disposition is itself a sin of awful magnitude. It is true, that no man will come

to Christ, unless inclined and disposed by the influence of the Holy Spirit; but be it considered, that the very state of mind and heart which renders that influence indispensable, is a state of criminal alienation from God, which admits of no defence. Be it remembered also, that no one remains destitute of the aid of the Spirit of God, except the man who neglects to seek it, because he is not in earnest to obtain it. Oh, what will be, hereafter, the feelings of those who plead inability, as the extenuation of the sin of unbelief; and at the same time present no supplication, at the throne of grace, for the influence so graciously promised, without which, they confess, they can do nothing. Oh, "why will ye die," with the way of life eternal full in view? Why will you not plead the promise; and, relying upon its fulfilment, come, without delay, to Christ, that you may be saved? He died for the ungodly. He invites, he pardons, he saves the ungodly. Trust in his propitiation, in his righteousness, in his love, in his promise, and you are safe. You may be safe to-day. You may be delivered from condemnation this very hour. Lose not another moment. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved."

5. The christian should not be satisfied with the lowest degree of Faith, but should aim at its vigorous and habitual exercise.

Is it not recorded, to the eternal honour of the Father of the Faithful, that "he was strong in Faith, giving glory to God?" Was there any excellence which called forth, from the lips of Jesus, such animated expressions of approbation and delight, as instances of firm and powerful Faith? Is it not equally conducive to the honour of God, and to the peace and joy which we earnestly desire to attain? Is not Faith the grand, the vital, the inspiring and the controlling principle of the christian life? If, then, you are solicitous that your life on earth should be at once happy and useful, be it your prevailing desire and prayer, that you may live "a life of Faith on the Son of God," by means of "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."

And let every one examine himself, to ascertain, "whether he be in the Faith." Let not this point be taken for granted, without due scrutiny of heart. Do you truly believe on the Lord Jesus Christ? Does his gospel appear to you supremely important—supremely interesting? If you do not believe in its importance, in its excellence, and its adaptation to your state, as guilty and dying, you do not in reality believe it; you do not in reality understand it. Most certain it is, that the proclamation of its truths has involved you in awful responsibility; and that, in every instance in which you read



or hear its momentous declarations, your mind is becoming either more accessible or more impenetrable. Shall it be, in your case, "the savour of life unto life," or must it prove "the savour of death unto death?"—"He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

## LECTURE IV.

### THE CONNEXION OF FAITH WITH JUSTIFICATION.

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ROM. III. 28.

*Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.*

Two reasons may be assigned for the paramount importance attached to Faith in the representations of the sacred writers. The first is, that Faith is the *appointed* medium, and therefore the *only* medium of obtaining a personal interest in the blessings of salvation. The second is, that Faith is the most powerful and efficacious of all the principles, which operate in the production of holy obedience to the will of God. The latter of these considerations will engage our thoughts in a subsequent discourse; the former demands our present attention, and requires that attention to be yielded with unremitting energy of mind, and with the feeling of deepest interest. Are we not hastening, with all the rapidity of the stream of time, to the righteous tribunal of our Judge? With the awful solemnities of the decisive day vividly

depicted before the eye of the mind, what question can assume an importance worthy to be compared with this—"How shall man be just with God?" On the reply which we deliberately make to this grand and momentous inquiry, will depend the entire system of our religion. The doctrine of Justification before God was correctly represented by the great Reformers as the article which determines the standing or the falling of the church: and it was not without reason that the celebrated Luther declared, that if this one doctrine be abandoned, there is abandoned with it the whole of the christian system.

Let our attention be now directed to the two principal points on which it is important that our views should be scripturally correct:—

FIRST, The nature of that distinguishing privilege which the scriptures denote by the term Justification: and

SECONDLY, The wisdom and goodness of God in appointing Faith to be the exclusive medium of obtaining this privilege.

Let your thoughts be directed—

FIRST, TO THE NATURE OF JUSTIFICATION.

Theological writers have often commenced their explanation of this subject by observing, that Justification is a forensic term, borrowed from the proceedings of a court of justice, in the acquittal of a person who had been arraigned

on some charge of crime. It will be found, however, in this instance, as it has often appeared to me in other instances, that illustrations borrowed from the usages and transactions of men, render, at best, but very slender assistance in the attempt to conceive aright of the divine procedure; and, indeed, not unfrequently involve, in additional obscurity, the very subject on which light is desired. The remark appears to me to apply to the subject of Justification. In a court of justice, a case of pardon is so completely dissimilar to a case of acquittal, that the one is totally incompatible with the other, as it regards the same individual and the same crimination. If a man be pardoned, it would be an obvious perversion of language to say that he was acquitted; if a man be acquitted, it would not only be an abuse of words, but an act of gross injustice to the individual, to say that he was pardoned. In the case of pardon, the prisoner must have been previously convicted, either by the evidence adduced against him, or by his own spontaneous confession. In this case, justice would proceed to pronounce, and to execute, the sentence of the law, did not mercy interpose and grant a pardon. In this case, the party is liberated; but he goes forth to the world under the stigma of a culprit, who has been found guilty of the offence alleged, although, perhaps, under

some circumstances of partial extenuation. Very different is the case of the individual who is acquitted. In his case, the evidence brought against him has failed to establish the charge. He goes out of court free from the imputation of crime, and re-instated in the rights and privileges of a good member of society. Now the term Justification might apply to the case of the man who had been acquitted, but could by no means apply to the case of the man who had been pardoned. The peculiarity, however, of the scripture use of the term, in reference to Justification before God, is, its application both to the case of pardon and to the case of acquittal; and it is thus applied with full propriety; because, in point of fact, however different the course of proceedings may be from the model of human judicature, the same individual, who is first convicted and then pardoned, is also actually declared righteous in the sight of God.

This, it is obvious, would be impossible, if regard were paid exclusively to the character and actions of the offender. So far as he is personally and solely concerned, there is clear and ample ground for condemnation, but no ground at all for justification. He, however, who is "righteous in all his ways," is expressly said to "justify the ungodly." On no principle, then, can we conceive of the possibility of this, except on the principle of

substitution ; and this is the principle which constitutes the basis of a sinner's justification in the sight of God. One who is distinguished by spotless innocence, by transcendent merit, and by unrivalled dignity, voluntarily becomes the substitute of the offender. That substitute is none other than the Son of God, who, by the assumption of human nature, for that express purpose, is also become the Son of man. By his own most gracious and unsolicited engagement, he becomes responsible to divine Justice, for all the offences of those whose cause he has thus undertaken. Of him the penalty is exacted : in his person the penalty is endured ; so that on the ground of its being thus exacted and thus endured, they are, by an act of Justice, exempted from the punishment which they had deserved, and they receive a free and full forgiveness. But even this is not of itself sufficient to restore them from the awful effects of their delinquency, or to re-instate them in the situation of man's primeval blessedness. In order to their future and eternal happiness, it is necessary that much more be granted than the mere remission of punishment. There must be a full admission into the favour and friendship of God ; and there must be the grant of an interest in the inheritance of heaven's felicities. But that grant must proceed upon a valid title, and that title must arise out of adequate merit, and that merit can only attach to

sinless and perfect obedience, and that obedience, if not rendered by the individual in his own person, can only be available when rendered by a competent, a voluntary, and an accepted substitute. Such a substitute and surety is the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom asserts the inspired Apostle—"God hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

It could not be the meaning of the Apostle, in these emphatic words, that Christ was actually made sin itself, or actually constituted a sinner, for sin is the transgression of the law; and the law which is holy and just and good, "the Holy One of God" never, in one single instance, transgressed. Nor does the meaning of the Apostle appear to be fully expressed by those, who render the words—"He was made a sin-offering for us." This translation is not sufficiently faithful, nor does it fully amount to the force of the animated expression. The meaning appears to be, that, by the entire consent and voluntary undertaking of the Saviour, he was constituted the substitute and representative of the sinner; and was accordingly proceeded against, as though he had actually been the transgressor. On him was inflicted the punishment due to the sinner, because to him was imputed the guilt contracted by the sinner. "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all—He

was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities : the chastisement of our peace was upon him ; and with his stripes we are healed.”—“ He died the just for the unjust.”—“ He hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.” The substitution then being accepted by God, on the very same principle on which there is a legal transfer and imputation of our demerit to the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a legal transfer and imputation of his merit to us ; so that, in the eye of Justice, and for all the purposes of God’s moral government, his sufferings are our sufferings, his obedience is our obedience, and therefore his righteousness is our righteousness : in the concise and energetic words of the Apostle, “ we are made the righteousness of God in him.” All that it was necessary for the honour of divine Justice to require, in order to avert the ruin, and to secure the salvation, of the sinner, has thus been accomplished. In the dreadful sufferings endured by the sinner’s substitute, Justice has had its course. In the perfect obedience of that glorious substitute, the law has been most signally honoured. He who “ finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and made reconciliation for iniquity, has also brought in an everlasting righteousness.” And now can God be “ just even while justifying the ungodly.”—He “ declares his righteousness” even in the act of.



granting the remission of numberless offences. His justice is asserted, his government is honoured, while his mercy gloriously triumphs! In their full-orbed radiance we now exultingly contemplate the attributes of the God of salvation. "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other." Oh, glorious display of "the manifold wisdom of God!" Oh, wondrous development of the economy of redeeming love! Rejoice, Oh my fellow-sinners, that for rebels of our degenerate and apostate race there has been thus provided a full and a free redemption! Now may man be "just with God." A way is opened for a safe appearance before the judgment seat. Unshackled with restrictions or with conditions, (save only the simple requirement "to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ,") to sinners, as such, and to sinners of every degree, is the ministry of reconciliation addressed. The blessed God himself, the offended majesty of heaven, has not only devised the means of reconciliation, and carried them into full effect; but now commands the proclamation of mercy to go forth into all the world, and even beseeches sinners to be reconciled to himself; "because he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

But a question now occurs equal in magnitude and importance to the principles already con-

sidered: it regards the method prescribed by Him "who justifies the ungodly," for obtaining a personal interest in the blessings of Justification. To this inquiry our text returns a lucid and decisive answer. It is deduced from a train of clear and conclusive reasoning.—"Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Some examination of the principles from which the conclusion is drawn we shall attempt, in considering,

SECONDLY, *The wisdom and goodness of God in rendering Faith the exclusive medium of obtaining an interest in that high privilege.*

Let it be observed,

1. That Justification before God must of necessity be obtained, either exclusively on the ground of human merit, or exclusively on the ground of divine grace.

The attempt to combine the one with the other is indeed perpetually made, under the influence of strong delusion, but invariably made in vain. Thousands there are, in this enlightened country, who have no hesitation in confessing, that their character is defective and their conduct chargeable with sin, so that they must be in part indebted to divine grace and mercy; while they take credit to themselves for many principles and feelings and actions, on which they build a hope of acceptance with God. They perceive nothing

inconsistent or incongruous in the attempt, so often made, to unite together their own righteousness, and the righteousness of Christ, as the conjoined basis of their expectation of being eventually pronounced "just with God." Now in the estimation of the Apostle Paul, and in your estimation, if you think aright, these things are perfectly irreconcilable and incompatible. They are as dissimilar and discordant as a matter of right, and a matter of favour—as that which you boldly claim, and that which you humbly solicit—as that which you pay to the servant who applies for his well-earned wages, and that which you give to the beggar who implores the pittance of charity. The two things cannot be blended, and ought not to be confounded. If Justification be "by grace, then is it no more of works; otherwise grace is no more grace:"—it would lose its very nature, and, by the least admixture, cease to be what it is;—"but if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work;"—it would lose its very nature, and, by the least admixture, cease to be what it is; so as to frustrate the whole scheme of redeeming mercy, and to falsify all the representations of the God of truth.

2. Justification by any merit of our own is, in its own nature, absolutely impossible.

The act of Justification is a solemn, judicial, and irreversible decision on the part of God,

declaring the individual to be righteous, and, consequently, entitled to the full reward of righteousness; so that no charge whatever can be substantiated or alleged against him. The righteousness, then, on the ground of which he is justified, must be, in the highest sense, perfect and complete, without one single flaw, without one single defect. Now we have seen, that the righteousness requisite to Justification must either be exclusively our own, or exclusively that of another: can it then be *our own* on which we are prepared to build our hope? Can we plead a faultless rectitude of heart and of life, before the judgment seat? That no human being upon earth can attempt this, without infatuation, it is the design of the Apostle to prove, in the chapter of which our text is a part. "We have proved," says that great master of sound argumentation—that enlightened observer of human nature, under all its diversified aspects—"We have proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God, They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.—Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may

be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. . . Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Permit me to ask, do your minds render full homage to these explicit and reiterated assertions? If your judgment is compelled to assent to them as correct, does your conscience, with penitential compunction, plead guilty to the charge? Do the relentings of a contrite heart produce within you that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of? Do you abandon as hopeless, absurd, and even criminal; the attempt to establish a claim on the reward of righteousness, by any performance, or by any excellencies of your own?

Since there is so strong a tendency in the human heart to cling to some refinement of self-righteousness, I must still be allowed to press the inquiry, by a more specific reference to the just requirements of God. Let me ask you, then:—have you yielded entire obedience to that law which requires us to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and strength; and our neighbour as ourselves? Have you habitually fixed your supreme affection on the blessed God; uniformly regarding Him as your chief good; and gratefully presenting to Him, every day and every hour, the homage of your hearts, and

the obedience of your lives? Do you consult his pleasure in every arrangement and in every pursuit, desiring, above all things, to promote his glory? Have you from your very childhood consecrated to Him your bodies and your spirits, as a living, holy, and acceptable sacrifice? Have you invariably loved your neighbour as yourself, and consulted his interests equally with your own? Have you never acted otherwise towards any fellow-creature than you would wish that he should act towards you? Has neither selfishness, nor pride, nor sinful anger, nor evil-speaking, in any single instance, been detected by Him who "searcheth the heart, and knoweth what is in man?" Even had a failure or an offence occurred but in one single instance, be it remembered, that "whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point," is pronounced "guilty;" rendering it evident, by his act of rebellion against the authority of the lawgiver, that nothing is wanting but the force of temptation, to convict him of being in point of fact, as he is in point of spirit, "guilty of all." What further need can there be of evidence to prove, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no man living be justified?"

3. Justification by Faith is designed and adapted to secure to the God of grace the glory of our salvation.

Faith is that act of the mind by which we receive the testimony which God has given of his Son, and consequently receive and embrace, as worthy of our firmest confidence, the all-sufficient Saviour. Now, by the wise and gracious appointment of God, the act by which we receive the Saviour, is the medium of obtaining "the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity."—"To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness;" because his faith embraces, as the object of sole dependence, the righteousness of that glorious substitute, who was "made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."—"Being then justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this state of favour wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." With admirable wisdom is it determined, that justification shall be exclusively by faith, in order that it may be, and may obviously appear to be, "by grace."—"We are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith* in his blood; that he might be just, and the justifier of him who *believeth* in

Jesus: Where is boasting then?—It is excluded. By what law?—Of works?—Nay, but by the law of faith! Will a man venture to arrogate to himself merit, merely for receiving as true, and embracing as worthy of regard, the testimony of God himself; and a testimony designed to secure the interests of his immortal soul? To refuse credence and confidence to that testimony, must, indeed, be a sin of most peculiar aggravation; but simply to receive that which comes to us with such attestations and such claims, can no more authorize a plea for the reward of merit, than the act of permitting to come into contact with the organs of our corporeal frame, the light we see, or the air we breathe, or the food we taste.

4. The doctrine of Justification by Faith presents the greatest possible encouragement to the repenting and returning sinner.

This doctrine is, unquestionably, entitled to the character of good news and glad tidings to such as were ready to perish. To such it is addressed. It meets their case; it meets their exigencies; it meets their feelings. It prescribes not a course of preparatory duties, for which they feel they have no qualifications. It places not, in the distance of dim and remote futurity, the period for obtaining "peace with God, and a good hope through grace." No, it exhibits a glorious work, as already accomplished by redeeming love, and as



fitted; at the very moment of exhibition, to become the basis of hope to sinful men. It assures them, that "Christ died for the ungodly: that God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It teaches them, that the honour of God has been so consulted in the obedience and the sufferings of the Saviour, that no obstacle stands in the way of their immediate forgiveness,—their entire Justification. It shows them, that they have only to embrace the testimony, and to trust in the promise, of a faithful God, in order to appropriate the present and eternal blessings of the great salvation.

"If," observes Mr. Erskine, "the gospel addressed merely our generous feelings, our love of what is right and excellent, our sense of what is beautiful and lovely, it would be a very different thing from what it is; it would be suited to another order of beings, and, with regard to us, would scarcely be deserving the name of glad tidings. But, blessed be the name of our God, he has addressed us in that character which cleaves closest to us. He has spoken to us as base and polluted; but, above all, as selfish beings. The very first principle which he addresses, is that of instinctive self-preservation. He meets the natural cry of misery, and the weary and undefined cravings of the unsatisfied spirit. His loudest and most general invitations, both in the

Old and New Testaments, are addressed, not to the moral, but to the natural feelings; to the sense of misery and the desire of happiness. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters."—"Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."—"Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." At this despised door of nature the Saviour knocks, and through it he deigns to enter. He came to bind up the broken heart, and to comfort all that mourn. And many come, as it seems, led by the mere instinctive longing after enjoyment, and try the gospel as a last and forlorn experiment, after the failure of every other attempt to obtain happiness.—And, oh! what an unlooked-for discovery do they make! He, who had found no resting-place in this world, and who had wandered through it in quest of some object, however insignificant, that might interest him, and for a moment at least remove the sense of that hopeless languor which lay dead upon his heart, finds now an object which his widest desires cannot grasp, even filial communion with God here, and the full enjoyment of Him, through a magnificent eternity, on the very threshold of which he already stands. He, who has felt himself too weak to resist the storms and roughnesses of life, learns to lean with confidence on Omni-

potence. He, whose conscience of sin has made life a burden to him, and at the same time has taught him to look with a vague horror to futurity, applies to that fountain which was opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, and he has peace with God, through faith in Christ Jesus."

5. The possession of Faith should call forth from the believer the most grateful acknowledgments.

"By grace are ye saved through Faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God." And has this gift been bestowed on me?—well may the christian exclaim, with grateful admiration:—Once I lived in unbelief; without faith; without hope; without Christ; without God in the world. I heard the gospel with the outward ear; but my heart was hard and cold. I was dead towards God, and alive only to the pursuits and pleasures of this transient world. For me the name of Jesus had no charms, the bible no beauties, the sabbath no delights, and heaven itself no strong attractions. I lived under the frown of God, and yet did not tremble at that frown. I was daily exposed to the wrath which cometh and abideth, and yet I remained without any awakening apprehensions. There was but a step between me and death eternal. Oh what dangers have I at length escaped; what happiness

have I attained; what glories now await me! "What shall I render to the Lord for benefits such as these?" What do I not owe to the God of my salvation, who, by the life-giving energy of his spirit, convinced me of sin, and especially of the sin of unbelief, chased away the darkness from my mind, removed the hardness of my heart, rescued me from the power of the tempter and destroyer, justified me freely by his grace, and taught me to live a life of Faith on Him who was "delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." Let my lips shew forth his praise; let my heart glow with emotions of indescribable gratitude and love, and whatsoever I do in word or deed, let me "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving glory to God by him." From my inmost soul, would I ever say,—“Lord, increase my Faith:” like Abraham, may I be “strong in Faith, giving glory to God:” like Stephen, may I be “full of Faith, and of the Holy Ghost.” With the Apostle of the Gentiles, may I be able to say —“I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”—“May Christ dwell in my heart by Faith; that being rooted and grounded in love, I may be able to comprehend,

with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that I may be filled with all the fulness of God."

## LECTURE V.

### THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF FAITH.

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ACTS xv. 9.

*Purifying their hearts by Faith.*

FROM the reasonings and illustrations of a former discourse, it is, I trust, sufficiently apparent, that the belief of the gospel is directly adapted to relieve the conscience from a sense of guilt, and to infuse into the mind "the peace which passeth all understanding." This must surely be regarded, by every man who can think, and by every man who can feel, as a result most devoutly to be wished. But is there no reason to anticipate another effect, and one which cannot be contemplated without the utmost alarm? Is there not too much reason to dread the operation of tendencies unfavourable to the interests of holiness? If the pardoning mercy of God is to be obtained on the simple exercise of Faith in the Redeemer, will not a presumption on the facility of obtaining forgiveness, become an encouragement to the indulgence of sin? If Faith be dissevered from works, in the prescribed

method of Justification before God, is there no danger lest Faith should be dissevered from works in the actual course and tenor of the believer's life? My attempt shall now be to prove, that, in the case of true and genuine Faith, the fear is perfectly unfounded:—that, on the contrary, the Faith of the gospel is directly and powerfully adapted to secure holiness of heart and of life. Its moral influence is divinely designed to be, and actually has been, in every age, precisely of the character ascribed to it by the Apostle Peter, in the words which have now been read. On the arrival of Paul and Barnabas, as deputies from the church at Antioch, the apostles and elders were convened, to deliberate and to decide on the question regarding the imposition of the yoke of the Mosaic ritual, on converts of Gentile extraction. "And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them; Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles, by my mouth, should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." Of the necessity and the difficulty of effecting the purification of the hearts of polluted idolaters, you may be.

prepared to form some conception, by consulting the pages of ancient history, both sacred and profane, as well as by perusing the recent communications of christian missionaries among the heathen. Now, if the Faith of the gospel was found to be an effectual corrective and purifier of the heart at Antioch, and at Corinth, and at Ephesus, and at Rome; and if it be found to be invariably productive of the same effect at the present day, in every pagan region, and every degraded tribe, on which the grand experiment has been made; we may safely and legitimately conclude, that the gospel is not more calculated to impart peace to the conscience than to secure holiness of heart. The purifying process of the christian Faith may be traced in three distinct but connected operations:—

Faith calls into exercise the most powerful principles of our nature, and engages them in the promotion of holiness:—

Faith brings the mind into immediate contact with the truths, which are directly calculated to promote sanctity of character:—and

Faith excites earnestness of desire, and importunity of prayer, for the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

*FIRST, Faith calls into exercise the most powerful principles of our nature, and engages them in the promotion of holiness.*



It will be sufficient to exhibit the operation of two of these principles :—

The first in order and in eminence is *Love*.

The Faith which justifies is the Faith "which worketh by love." It works in the production of love to God; because it embraces the testimony concerning the love of God to us. "We have known and believed the love which God hath to us. God is love. We love him because he first loved us. God hath so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Now the love which Faith first induces is *the love of gratitude*. I learn, may the christian say, from the word of God, confirming the testimony and deepening the conviction of conscience, that I am a sinner, ready to perish under the burden of accumulated guilt. I read, in the book of truth, the sentence of the righteous Judge, condemning the sinner to death. I see before me an awful eternity, and the thought of an eternity of woe is more than my heart can endure. But I hear a voice of mercy from Him who sitteth on the throne of heaven. Its language is—"Deliver from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom." The incarnate Son of God has given his life, a ransom for many. The testimony of the blessed God is, "that he hath given to us eternal life; and that this life is in

his Son." I cordially embrace the faithful saying, so worthy of all acceptance, and in the act of receiving the testimony I receive a pardon. With ineffable delight I learn, that "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" but that, being justified by Faith, they attain an established peace with God. Much I wonder, and much I love, when I contemplate the display of love divine towards a rebellious world; but more I wonder, and more I love, when I discover love, so amazing, so divine, directed even towards such a rebellious, perverse, ungrateful worm of the dust, as I perceive and confess myself to be, and when I find encouragement to hope that neither the number nor the aggravation of my sins has been permitted to oppose an insurmountable barrier to the tender mercy of God. What shall I now render to the Lord, who forgiveth all our iniquities, and blotteth out all our transgressions. What is it which his will requires me to pursue; what is it which his will requires me to avoid? I seek for direction in his word; and I find it written there—"This is the will of God, even your sanctification."—Sanctity, then, of heart and life, becomes the object of my desire, and my pursuit. I find that the design of the Saviour's death was "to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

It is, therefore, my heart's desire and prayer, that the purifying process may be going forwards in my inmost soul, and be rendered distinctly apparent by the unequivocal and practical indications of universal holiness. I learn that I am not my own, but "bought with a price," and therefore laid under the strongest of all obligations to glorify God with my body and spirit, which are his: constrained, therefore, by the mercies of God, I present my whole person "a living sacrifice; holy and acceptable to Him, which is my reasonable service." Mark, then, the moral influence of Faith. Faith produces gratitude, and gratitude impels to holiness.

But the love of gratitude soon produces the love of *admiration* and *complacency*. Having ceased to contemplate the divine character with alarm, we begin to view it with admiring delight. Dread has subsided into awe, and prejudice has yielded to love. We open the eye of the mind, now cleared from its films and freed from its veil, and the glory and beauty of the divine perfections are beheld in their own resplendent light. In the harmonious assemblage of attributes which constitute the character of Jehovah, we discern all that is worthy of the Lord of the universe; all that is conducive to the happiness of his dutiful and loyal creatures. Beholding

“the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ,” every perfection appears not more awful than amiable. In all his attributes, the blessed God is now seen to display ineffable glory; but, in the effulgence of his holiness, he manifests “the glory that excelleth.” Admiring this “beauty of holiness,” we now desire, and pray, and strive with the energies of a mind renewed, that we may be holy even as he is holy. We find, in the precepts and in the promises of his word, nothing to repress, but every thing to excite and to encourage this holy ambition. We even find it to be the eternal purpose of Him who changeth not, that we should be conformed to the image of his beloved Son. The imitation, then, of the Lord Jesus Christ, becomes the business of our lives; and it is our most intense desire, that the mind which was in Him may ever be in us. Mark, then, the moral influence of Faith. Faith produces the love of admiring and complacential delight; and this love becomes the incentive to humble imitation.

The second of those principles of our nature which operate with greatest power, is *Hope*.

“Being justified by Faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; and rejoice in Hope of the glory of God.” We have joy, and peace, and Hope, in believing. Not only does Hope, in the first instance, spring from Faith,

but by Faith it is sustained and excited. Now, the Hope of a believer in Jesus, is the "Hope of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away:" it is the Hope of admission to the felicities of the world, into which "nothing can enter that defileth." It induces, therefore, a powerful desire to be purified from all iniquity. It is a Hope of the society of the saints in light; it induces, therefore, a desire to be qualified for the purity of their communion. It is a Hope of being admitted into the immediate presence of the Redeemer, to behold his glory; it induces, therefore, a desire to be like him, when we see him as he is, in all the beauties of unsullied holiness. We wonder not, then, at the assertion of the Apostle John,—“he that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” The very contemplation of such objects naturally exerts a purifying influence on the heart. Let a man be much employed in thinking of heaven, and the joys of heaven, and the society of heaven, and the God of heaven, and the worship of heaven; and it requires no sagacity to predict, that he will become more and more dead to the polluting vanities of this present world, and more and more alive to the God of his salvation, whose glory he delights to contemplate, whose image he longs to attain. Not more certain is it, that impure thoughts cannot pass through the mind without

leaving some trace of contamination, than that the habitual contemplation of things holy and divine, must progressively assimilate the soul into their own resemblance. They will produce a distaste, and even a disgust, for all that is polluted, and a restless and most active desire to depart from all iniquity, and to abstain from every appearance of evil. With such feelings and such anticipations, we shall desire to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." Mark then the moral influence of Faith. Faith produces a "Hope of glory;" and Hope is a most powerful incentive to holiness.

Faith purifies the heart,

SECONDLY, *By bringing the mind into immediate contact with those truths, which are directly calculated to promote sanctity of character.*

That the distinguishing truths of the gospel of Christ are, by their very nature, adapted to effect the purification of the heart, I need not undertake to establish by force of argument. Suffice it, for the present, to remind you of one petition in the prayer of Him who came to be the Illuminator and the Purifier of our world—"Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." Now in order that this truth may produce its full effect upon the heart, it is necessary,—

1. That the essential and characteristic truths

of the gospel should take full possession of the mind.

They should occupy precisely that place in the mind of the believer, which they undoubtedly occupied in the mind and in the ministry of the great Apostle. He determined to know, and to make known, nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified: and this deliberate purpose was the result of a full and rational persuasion, that the doctrine of the cross is adapted to secure the two great ends of true religion—peace of conscience and purity of heart. Perfectly accordant with the determination of Paul, is the sentiment of the Apostle John. Having exhibited the cleansing virtue of the blood of Christ, he thus proceeds to announce the design and the tendency of the truths which constitute the gospel:—"these things write I unto you, that ye sin not." It has been well said, in a recent treatise on Faith, "that the doctrine of the atonement is the great spiritual mould, from which the living form of the christian character is to derive its features; and that could we closely and accurately yield ourselves to this mould, in all its lineaments, though we had never heard of the precepts of the gospel, our hearts and characters would present a complete counterpart to them." This has indeed been affirmed, in substance, by the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Romans. "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your

mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.—But God be thanked that although ye were the servants of sin, yet ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you;” or rather, “that mould of doctrine into which ye have been delivered.” The gospel is admirably represented as a perfect mould, into which the yielding mind of the believer is cast, that it may assume and exhibit its entire character, its exact impression. True holiness is, therefore, in strict propriety of expression, the holiness of truth; it is purity of character, induced by purity of principle. There is thus effected a conformity of intellect to the doctrines which are presented for our belief; and a conformity of heart to the principles which are designed to regulate our character. That such *ought to be* the purifying and transforming influence of truth, even a heathen moralist could assert. “Though a man may have learned moral science,” said Seneca, “and may teach what is to be done, and what is to be avoided, yet he is not a wise man, unless his mind derive a transformation from his doctrine.” That such *actually is* the purifying virtue of truth divine, a greater than Seneca has affirmed,—“be-



holding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

In order to the purification of the heart it is necessary,

2. That the system of divine truth be received in all its completeness.

While the Faith which purifies the heart has a primary reference to the character and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is commensurate with the whole extent of that truth which the word of God reveals; and it brings the mind into contact with every part of that entire system, which is "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness." If the mind come into contact with only a part of that truth,—and a part selected according to the taste and predilections of the individual,—there will be a corresponding defect of heart and character. If any one truth be isolated and detached from the divinely constituted system to which it belongs, so that its bearings upon other related truths are undiscerned or disregarded, that very truth itself will fail to produce its designed effect. If, for example, a man should fix an exclusive regard on the doctrine of Justification by Faith, and betray inattention to its practical bearings, and to the preceptive part of the christian system, it would be unreasonable to expect, in the character of

such an individual, an illustration of the purifying influence of the christian Faith. His mind has come into contact only with a part of that very truth, which he has daringly detached from the place it was appointed to occupy and to adorn. He misapprehends its nature, and even perverts its design. Antinomian he is in theory, and it can occasion no surprise, if Antinomian he should also be in practice. It becomes, then, a question of no ordinary importance;—how shall we endeavour, with the greatest probability of success, to counteract the formidable and pestilential evil, to which, without uncharitableness, we attach the stigma of so opprobrious an epithet? Shall we attempt it by giving less prominence to the doctrine of Justification, or by insisting less urgently on the doctrine of the Atonement, or by shrinking from the bold and perpetual announcement of the doctrines, which magnify the sovereign and unmerited favour of the God of our salvation? Perish the thought! To adopt such a course, in itself awfully culpable, would be only to aggravate the evil we lament, and to afford a most acceptable pretext to the abettors of the system we would oppose. On the contrary, let us exhibit these glorious doctrines in all their fulness, in all their prominence, and in all their momentous importance; but, at the same time, let us never fail to connect with them, according to the Apostolic

example, the motives which urge, and the precepts which guide, to the practice of universal holiness.

“ If I open the door of my mind to the word of God,” says Dr. Chalmers, “ I as effectually make it the repository of various truths, as if I open the door of my chamber, and take in the bible, I make this chamber the repository of the book, and of every chapter, and of every verse, that is contained in it. I thus bring my mind into contact with every influence, that every one truth is fitted to exercise over it. If there be nothing in these truths contradictory to each other, (and if there be, let this set aside, as it ought, the authority of the whole communication,) then the mind acts a right and consistent part, in believing each of them, and in submitting itself to the influence of each of them. And thus it is, that believing the propitiation which is through the blood of Christ, for the remission of sins that are past, I may feel through him the peace of reconciliation with the Father; and believing that he who cometh unto Christ for forgiveness must forsake all sin, I may also feel the necessity which lies upon me of departing from all iniquity; and believing that in myself there is no strength, for the accomplishment of such a task, I may look around for other expedients, than such as can be devised by my own natural wisdom, or carried into effect by my own natural energies; and

believing that in the hand of Christ, there are gifts for the rebellious, and that one of these gifts is the Holy Spirit to strengthen his disciples, I may look to him for my sanctification, even as I look to him for my redemption; and believing that the gift is truly promised, as an answer to prayer, I may mingle a habit of prayer with a habit of watchfulness and of endeavour. And thus may I go abroad over the whole territory of divine truth, and turn to its legitimate account every separate portion of it; and be in all a trusting, and a working, and a praying, and a rejoicing, and a trembling disciple,—and that, not because I have given myself up to the guidance of clashing and contradictory principles,—but because, with a Faith commensurate to the testimony of God, I give myself over, in my whole mind, and whole person, to the authority of a whole bible.”

It is necessary,

3. That Faith in the truth which sanctifies be in constant and vigorous exercise.

Faith does not operate in the production of holiness, by any secret or mysterious charm, of which no rational account can be given. It operates by giving the truth of God a fixed and constant dwelling place in the mind and heart. Tell me, ye who are christians indeed, when is it that your hearts feel most powerfully the tendencies to holiness; when is it that you achieve

the most decided victories over the corrupt principles which struggle within you for the ascendancy ; when is it that you most effectually overcome the world which would ensnare or domineer ? Is it not when the truth of the gospel most powerfully impresses your hearts, and when " the word of Christ dwells in you richly in all wisdom and spiritual understanding," taking possession of your capacities of thought and feeling, and controlling, by its gentle but effectual influence, all the movements of the inner man ? And when is it that you find the opposite tendencies acquiring temporary strength ? Is it not when the cares of the world, and the occupations of the present life, engross your thoughts, and absorb your minds, and withdraw your attention from the truth which purifies the heart ? Would you, then, desire that Faith should produce its full effect, and exert its moral influence over your character and course of life, be it your concern that Faith itself be maintained in habitual and vigorous exercise ; and be it your earnest prayer, " that Christ may dwell in your hearts by Faith." Let your thoughts be much engaged in direct meditation on the word of the truth of the gospel. Let not the stated seasons of retired devotion, at the commencement and the close of every day, be unduly contracted ; but let them be sufficiently extended, to allow the

mind calmly and vigorously to yield its susceptibilities to the influence of the truth which gives peace to the conscience and purity to the heart. If by the study of the word of God, under that unction of the Holy Spirit which guides into all truth, the mind be imbued with the wisdom which is pure, and enriched with the knowledge which is purifying, there will be the best preparation for the business of every day. In the intervals of leisure it will then be easy and delightful, to recur to the truths which have so recently occupied the mind, and predisposed it to the exercise of every holy temper and every purifying hope. Remember, then, that whatever be the power of truth, it cannot be reasonably expected to influence the mind, unless it be habitually contemplated by the mind. It must become the food of the mind, gratifying to its taste, digested by its inward processes of reflective thought, and incorporated with its very frame and structure. Then, and only then, will there be growth in grace, and the production of the fruits of holiness.

Faith exerts a purifying influence,

THIRDLY, *By exciting earnestness of desire and importunity of prayer, for the sanctifying energies of the Holy Spirit.*

Were a man to believe in the doctrine of the corruption of human nature by sin, without

believing in the doctrine of its renovation by the Spirit of God, he might become the prey of wretchedness. He would be alive to a sense of helpless misery, and would find himself destitute of all resources. But such, blessed be God, is not the situation of him who believes in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He rejoices in the discovery, that there is not only a divine Redeemer, but that there is also a divine Sanctifier;—that there is not only a provision for the removal of his guilt, by virtue of an adequate atonement, but that there is also a provision for the renewal of his heart, by a process of omnipotent grace.

Never let it be forgotten, that the influence of the truth of God, and the influence of the Spirit of God, are inseparably connected together. We cannot think too highly of the adaptation of divine truth to purify the heart of man; but, notwithstanding all that adaptation, the depravity of the heart would oppose a determined and an effectual resistance to its power, were it not that He to whose wisdom we trace the adaptation, Himself secures the efficiency. The truth is indeed mighty, but it is "mighty through God." The very petition of our interceding Saviour, which bears so decisive a testimony to the power of truth, bears a testimony, no less decisive, to the superadded power of God:—"Sanctify them through thy truth." It is as if he had said, "Let

thy power accompany thy truth. Open their hearts to receive the truth, and secure, by thine own influence, its entire entrance, its full effect." With the sentiment of this petition accords also the representation of the Apostle Peter, in the words of our text. He had been honoured to announce to the Gentiles "the word of the gospel;" but did this supersede the necessity of a divine influence? On the contrary, he proceeds to say—"And God, who knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." In addition, then, to the act of Peter, who addressed to them "the word of the gospel," there was the operation of God himself, producing in their hearts the principle of Faith, and rendering that principle effective in the production of holiness.

Nor is it unimportant to observe, that under the comprehensive title of "the Truth," in the scriptural use of the term, is included, as one of its component and essential parts, that truth which regards the necessity of divine influence, to give effect to the written and the preached word. The numerous and the gracious promises of the influence of the Holy Spirit, form a leading and conspicuous part of the testimony which Faith embraces; and, in proportion to the esti-



mation in which we hold them, and the firmness with which we grasp them, and the earnestness with which we plead them at the throne of grace, shall we ourselves experience the purifying virtue of the truth of Christ. It was in reference to this glorious influence that Jesus said to his disciples; "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you; for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone; or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent; or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, knew how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

Why is it, then, that we are so discouraged and so despondent, when we feel within us a moral weakness, producing the conviction that, without resources superior to our own, we are unequal to the conflict between sin and holiness? Are not the best and the noblest of all resources provided? Are they not ample, are they not accessible? Why, then, is it that we do not seek them with greater solieitude, and expect them with greater confidence? If we receive, in rich abundance, the unction of the Holy One; if our

hearts be constituted the temples of the Divine Spirit, consecrated as his dwelling-place, and filled with his presence; there will be the best evidence, in the distinguishing features of our character, and in the general tenor of our lives, that our hearts are, indeed, purified by Faith.

Thus have we endeavoured to trace the glorious process of the believer's sanctification. We have contemplated the purifying influence of Faith under three distinct aspects. We have seen that Faith calls into exercise the most powerful principles of our nature, and engages them in the pursuit of holiness:—that Faith brings the mind into contact with those truths which are directly calculated to purify the heart; and that Faith excites earnestness of desire and importunity of prayer, for the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

If such, then, be the moral influence of Faith, how greatly should we admire the wisdom of God in attaching to Faith so great an importance in the requirements of his holy word. In a former discourse, I directed your thoughts to the consideration of the wisdom displayed in appointing Faith to be the medium of Justification, because this appointment secures to the unmerited grace of God the glory of man's salvation. But, from a view of the moral influence of Faith, we may discern additional grounds for admiring

"the manifold wisdom of God." Conceive, for a moment, that God had proclaimed to sinners of our apostate race, a free and unrestricted pardon, without conveying any intimation whatever of the means, by which that forgiveness could be rendered compatible with the honour of the divine character and government. Conceive that there had been granted no disclosure of the method, by which God can be just, while the Justifier of the ungodly. In this case, would there not have been the absence of the moral means most powerfully conducive, and even indispensably requisite, to the renovation of man's corrupted heart? On the supposition, then, that his depravity of nature would still remain, is it possible that he could be happy, even under the proclamation of unconditional forgiveness? Could there be presented to the universe a more awful spectacle than would be exhibited in the human being who, by an act of pardon, had been apparently rescued from the abyss of absolute perdition, but who still continued without any fitness of character for an entrance into the world of celestial blessedness? But, to prevent the possibility of that which has been now supposed, the proclamation of mercy is accompanied by the history of redeeming love, and the testimony of God respecting "his unspeakable gift." The eyes of the understanding being opened by

the illuminating Spirit, the sinner, who was ready to perish, views, with admiring wonder and cheering hope, the way of salvation by Christ. His heart begins to glow with love to Him who came into our world of sin and death," not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." Under the influence of mingled emotions of gratitude and joy and hope, he yields himself to the service of his redeeming Lord, as one who is "alive from the dead," and whose best energies of body and of mind are henceforth to be the devoted "instrument of righteousness unto God." The history, then, of his moral transformation may be summed up in these few words:—his heart is purified by Faith. Is such the history of *our* hearts?—Could an illustration of this purifying process be gathered from the retrospect which *we ourselves* could take? Have *we* that Faith which, as the appointed medium of justification, introduces peace into the conscience, and, as the grand instrument of renewing grace, effectually purifies the heart?

And where is the tribe, where is the individual of our race, to whose moral nature there is not an adaptation, in the announcements and requirements of the gospel of Christ? Is not the "faithful saying worthy of all accep-

tation," and wisely adapted to men of every order of intellect, and every gradation of rank, and every variety of character? Millions, it is true, are destitute of all intellectual and moral culture; and, therefore, totally unprepared for the efforts of reasoning and abstraction, which belong to a course of scientific and systematic instruction. But the gospel of the Son of God is presented to them in the simplest of all forms; in the form of a concise, impressive, and joyous announcement. It is a proclamation of glad tidings. It is a testimony containing wondrous and glorious facts, expressed with the utmost "plainness of speech." By the accompanying power which, according to the promise of God, goes forth with the testimony of truth, the hardened hearts of multitudes, the most degraded of our race, have been touched, and melted, and changed; and some of the noblest illustrations of the purifying power of Faith, over the most obdurate and the most polluted minds, have been exhibited to our view in the records of missionary success. Gloriously does the gospel now triumph, in many regions of the heathen world; and more glorious still are the triumphs which the word of truth authorizes us to expect. Soon may the time arrive, by the promised effusion of the Holy Spirit "upon all flesh," in which, it may

be said, of every nation and kindred and people under heaven—"God hath put no difference between us and them, purifying *their* hearts by Faith."

## LECTURE VI.

THE ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLE OF HOLINESS—LOVE TO  
GOD.

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MATT. XXII. 36—38.

*Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*

It is not always found, that an inquiry into the radical meaning of terms conducts, by a direct and easy course, to the most correct ideas of the subjects on which they are employed. In our attempts, however, to arrive at satisfactory conceptions of Holiness, the aid which may be obtained from an etymological source is by no means to be disregarded. The words usually selected by the writers, both of the Old Testament and of the New, as expressive of the nature of Holiness, convey, in their primary import, the idea of consecration. They are employed in reference to that, of whatever order

or nature it may be, which is separated from a common use, and unalienably devoted to the Most High. The sabbath was separated from the other days of the week, and consecrated in a peculiar sense to the service and enjoyment of God; and it is therefore pronounced holy. The Temple at Jerusalem was consecrated to the worship of Jehovah, and would have been contaminated and desecrated by any other use; it is therefore designated holy. All its vessels and utensils were devoted exclusively to the same hallowed purpose, and were therefore declared to be holy. All its ministers, and all its worshippers, are required to be thus consecrated, and are therefore represented as holy. Now it is obvious, that the precise character of the consecration itself must correspond with the nature of that which is thus solemnly devoted. If it be a *thing* which is consecrated to God—a form of inanimate, unconscious matter, all the consecration of which it can admit, is simply that of being solemnly dedicated to the honour of Jehovah, and exclusively employed in his service, by the act of the obedient worshipper. But if it be a *person*—a living, and a conscious being, the consecration must be by his own voluntary act. It is the act of an intellectual and accountable creature, cheerfully and unreservedly surrendering himself, in body and in



spirit, to Him who demands and accepts this entire dedication. It is a surrender which proceeds upon just and enlightened views of the attributes and the claims of God. It proceeds upon a conviction, that the character of Him who made us, comprises all the glorious and infinite perfections, which are entitled to our adoring homage and our highest love. It proceeds upon a persuasion, that, in the act of self-surrender, we most directly consult our own real happiness, while we present the most acceptable tribute which we can pay, to our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. It proceeds upon a desire to attain that resemblance to the adorable Jehovah, in moral excellence, which was the original dignity and glory of our nature, and by the restoration of which alone we can acquire a fitness, for the future and eternal enjoyment of his presence.

What, then, is the grand, distinguishing, and effective principle, which directly impels to the act of self-dedication, and renders that spontaneous act a source of ineffable delight? It is Love. It is the very principle which our Saviour declares to be the first and great commandment;—which secures a cheerful conformity to all the minuter requirements of the law;—and without which, not one single act of true obedience can be performed by any creature that

exists. No other considerations, then, need I adduce, in order to render it distinctly apparent—that the essential principle of Holiness is none other than Love to the blessed God.

Permit me now to direct your regard—

FIRST, To the leading developments of this principle: and

SECONDLY, To the importance of ascertaining whether this essential principle of true religion be implanted in our hearts.

FIRST, Let your attention be directed to the leading developments of this grand principle of holiness.

Instead of the unprofitable attempt to offer a formal definition of love to God, or to establish a metaphysical discrimination between the nature of love to God, and the character of the love we cherish towards human objects of attachment, I deem it more desirable to trace out some of the leading exercises, and most prominent indications, of the love which God requires.

Let me specify,

*First*, Admiration of the divine excellencies.

The discovery of excellencies which we cannot but admire, has a powerful influence in awakening that regard, which gradually ripens into esteem, and that esteem which is matured into affection. Among our fellow-creatures, indeed, we sometimes discern qualities which

compel our admiration, without attracting our love. With emotions, not unlike those which would be excited by the sublime and awful in the scenes of inanimate nature, we contemplate splendid talent, and lofty daring, and bold adventure, and dazzling achievements, when, instead of being connected with the gentle and benignant feelings of the heart, they are associated with sordid selfishness, and unrelenting ambition, and over-weening pride, and unmastered anger, and unbridled appetite. On the other hand, there are among our fellow-creatures, many whose amiable properties call forth our love, but whose character presents not to view those loftier and more commanding excellencies which awaken the soul's admiration. And in the instances in which the moral sublime and beautiful are happily blended in the same character, not seldom are there found spots, and blemishes, and incongruities, which prescribe unwelcome limits both to our admiration and affection. But, from the most perfect specimens of human nature in this imperfect world, turn away now your thoughts, that you may contemplate the perfection of glory and of beauty in the character of the blessed and adorable Jehovah. Could you converse with the *wisest* of all the children of men, at this time living on the face of the earth, how would your hearts be smitten with the love of wisdom: what then should be the

sentiments and feelings habitually cherished towards that Being, who is the *fountain of all wisdom and intelligence*, human and angelic! Could you converse with the man of *purest* mind, on whose heart, and on whose most excursive fancy, holiness is written in fairest characters, how would you be smitten with the love of unsullied purity: what then should be the emotions of your soul towards that Being, who is the *fountain of all the purity of heaven*, and is Himself the Holy One, "glorious in holiness!" Could you converse with the man of most tender sympathy and most disinterested *benevolence*, how would your hearts glow with the love of pure philanthropy: what then are the feelings you should cultivate towards Him, who implanted all the tender susceptibilities ever developed in the human character, who is Himself *infinite, essential Love*; and has displayed, to the admiration of an astonished universe, in the gift unspeakable, the love which *passeth knowledge!*" "When I contemplate these, and other inseparable attributes of thy glorious character," well may the christian exclaim, "I am lost in wonder and in love! Worthy art thou, O adorable Jehóvah, to receive blessing and honour, and ceaseless praise! Worthy art thou of my supreme and ardent love. Invigorate my feeble powers, that I may comprehend more of the glory of thine infinite

excellencies. Chase away the darkness of my mind, and, by the illuminating energies of thy promised Spirit, say with mighty effect—‘Let there be light.’ Awaken those susceptibilities of heart, by which I may delight myself in thee, with most adoring love. Let the contemplation of thy uncreated and unbounded excellencies be my best solace, and my chief joy. Let every object which presents to my regard intellectual or moral excellencies, conduct my views to thyself, the source of all that is lovely; and, in the multitude of my thoughts within me, let thy comforts delight my soul!”

Love to God will be displayed,

*Secondly*, In gratitude for the favours he has bestowed.

Never, in the book of God, are we required to enter on the difficult and perplexing task of drawing a line of precise discrimination between the exercise of love to God, on the ground of what He is in himself, and the exercise of love to God on the ground of what He is to us. The love of complacential admiration is usually blended, almost imperceptibly, with the love of gratitude; and, indeed, the one naturally becomes a powerful incentive to the other. Do you fix your views on the manifestations of divine wisdom, power, and goodness, in the works of creation and of providence; what do you behold

in these but so many excitements to gratitude? The luminaries of the heavens, the revolution of the seasons, the control of the elements, the beauties of scenery, the productions of the ground, the profusion of life and of enjoyment through all the varieties of animated existence,—all display the goodness which we should, at once, devoutly admire, and acknowledge with grateful love. It is goodness directed towards *us*, as well as to myriads more; it is goodness in active operation towards our species, and towards ourselves. What, then, is due to that goodness which has assumed the aspect of Mercy, and displayed the tenderness of Love, in rescuing man from perdition? This is, indeed, “Love which passeth knowledge,” even the knowledge of those angels of light, who had viewed the manifestations of divine benevolence on a nobler and more extended scale, than can be rendered visible to inhabitants of this earthly region, wherein we, at present, dwell. Never before had they beheld the display of mercy towards the rebellious. It was an attribute of far different aspect which stood forth, in awful manifestation, when angels revolted from their God. Great must have been the astonishment of the hosts of heaven, that, towards a race in league with rebellious angels, mercy should be extended at all; what then must have been the emotions

with which they contemplated the stupendous plan, the glorious agency, the amazing and incalculable expenditure, by which, in full harmony with Justice and Truth, Mercy was to obtain its triumph. Never was such admiration called forth in heaven, as at the discovery, that the Son of God was to assume our inferior and degraded nature, and in that nature to struggle with toil and sorrow and ignominy and pains and demons and death! This may well be the love which angels delight to contemplate, for it is the love which "God himself commendeth." Shall then *our* hearts be cold? Was it for *us* the Son of God divested himself of his radiant glory on the throne of heaven, and embraced poverty and shame and agony and death, even the cursed death of the cross? Did he remember us in our low estate; and to save us from sinking into the abyss, whence there is no recovery, did he interpose with all the love of his heart; and by the power of his own arm did he accomplish our salvation? What then should be the warmth of our gratitude and the ardour of our love? Surely it should acquire the intensity of the most powerful of all our affections, and the ascendancy of the ruling principle in our hearts. Surely we should be prepared to say, even with Apostolic fervour, "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they

who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again." May we more fully know and more firmly believe "the love that God hath to us," and the love which he has "manifested toward us, in that he hath sent his only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through him."—"We love him because he first loved us." May our love "grow exceedingly." May the love of God be shed abroad most copiously in our hearts, by the Holy Spirit given unto us; and may we be "able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fulness of God."

Love to God includes,

*Thirdly*, Delight in Him as our chief good.

The delight which we take in any one, as an object of attachment, will be in proportion to the discovery of excellencies in his character, of his power to advance our happiness, and of the relation he sustains towards us. In addition then to the incentives to delight in God, arising from his glorious attributes, and his munificent gifts, let us think of the relation which, if we are believers in Jesus, the blessed God condescends to sustain towards us, with a view to be Himself our present and eternal portion. Are we reconciled to God by the death of his Son? Are we



“accepted in the beloved,” and no longer liable to condemnation? Is Jehovah become our Father and our God? Does he remember us with the favour which he bears to his own people; and has he visited us with his salvation? Then may we exultingly say, “This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death!” Each of us may be prepared to exclaim:—“No longer will I ask the question, Who will shew me any good? I have at length discovered the chief good, and the chief end, and the chief joy of man upon earth. Whom have I in heaven, O Lord, but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire in comparison with thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but thou art the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.—O Lord, I will praise thee; thou wast angry, but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid; for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation! May I now learn, by joyous experience, all that is comprehended in those wondrous words—‘I will be to thee a God.’ To the fulfilment of that promise will I now direct my views and expectations, for my best joys on earth, and the fulness of joy in heaven! Whatever gratifications are incompatible with these I cheerfully resign; and all enjoyments unconnected with these I will regard as

undeserving my solicitude, and as destitute of claims upon my heart. 'Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither should fruit be in the vines; although the labour of the olive should fail, and the fields should yield no meat; the flock should be cut off from the fold, and there should be no herd in the stall; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Unfold to my admiring mind, more of thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ, O God of my salvation; enlarge the capacity of my soul for the delights of thy presence; diffuse more copiously through my heart, the bliss-inspiring communications of the Holy Spirit; purify my nature more and more from the defiling and debasing and disquieting influences of this present evil world; and give me grace and strength to struggle effectually against the power of sin, which is ever endeavouring to impair and to interrupt my delight in thee. Be thou thyself my all-sufficient good. While still a stranger and sojourner in this vale of tears, as all my fathers were, may I 'walk in the light of thy countenance,' and dwell 'in the secret of thy presence.' May it be my prevailing desire to please thee, and my chief delight to serve thee; and whatsoever I do in word or deed, may I do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving glory to thee through him."

Having thus attempted (feebly and inade-

quately it is confessed) some illustration of this essential principle of holiness, let me direct your views,

**SECONDLY,** To the importance of ascertaining whether this principle be implanted in our hearts.

The transcendant importance of arriving at a decision on this point will appear, if you consider,

*First,* That it is the possession or the absence of this principle, which stamps our character and determines our condition.

When the Saviour was upon earth, and surrounded, on one occasion, by a numerous auditory, many of whom professed to be his disciples, he uttered these words of awful import—"I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." Can any doubt remain upon your mind with regard to the character and condition of the persons thus addressed? Is there any difficulty in determining whether they were in a state of safety or of danger, of happiness or of misery, of preparation or of unpreparedness, for death, and judgment, and eternity? You cannot be surprized that to such the Saviour should say—"Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life:—ye have not the word of God abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye receive not." If then you, my friends, have not the love of God in you, you have not in you the faith which justifies, or the truth which sanctifies. "Ye are yet in your sins," and exposed,

in all its tremendous extent, to the final condemnation and the "wrath to come." I beseech you, then, to bring yourselves to the prescribed test, and to the tribunal of your own conscience, as preparatory to that greater and more awful tribunal, before which you must shortly be arraigned. Suppose that throughout a congregation assembled in the house of God, the test of which we are speaking could go forth, so as to effect, by the power of conscience and by emotions not to be concealed, a line of visible demarcation, distinguishing the faithful from the unbelieving, the saint from the sinner, the saved from the condemned: could that line be distinctly traced, as it was slowly passing along, and winding its fearful way; Oh what discoveries would it unfold; what misgivings would it awaken as it approached; what appalling dread, as it rested in every instance for a moment, to render the discrimination apparent and undoubted! How would it reverse the decisions which self-love and wilful ignorance had before ventured to pronounce! How would it terminate the uncertainty and suspense in which many had been contented, if not even desirous, to remain! If that uncertainty spring from indifference as to the decision, the decision may be even now pronounced, on the very evidence of that indifference, although no line of demar-

cation, such as that we have been supposing, should be exhibited before our view. When the question is seriously proposed;—"Dost thou love the blessed God; dost thou love the Lord Jesus Christ;"—if, with cold and careless unconcern, thou art disposed to reply, "I do not know," and thou hast no inclination to institute the requisite scrutiny; certain, alas! it is, that the love of God has found no dwelling-place within thy heart. And be it remembered, that with regard to this principle, there can, in the divine estimation, be no neutrality. In the view of Him who searcheth the heart, the entire absence of love is regarded as the evidence of alienation and of enmity. In no other light can it be regarded by Him who has said—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment."

*Secondly*, Let it be considered, that the means of determining this momentous question are placed within our power.

Can you not reflect seriously on the nature of those developments of the principle of love to God which have been exhibited in this discourse? Can you not retire into the recesses of your own minds, and inquire whether you truly and habitually admire the excellencies of the divine character; whether you are cherishing a spirit

of gratitude for the innumerable and unmerited benefits bestowed ; and whether you indeed place your supreme delight in the blessed God, as your chief good and satisfying portion ? Enter, then, without delay, on the task of self-examination ; and if, after making the attempt, you still remain in doubtful suspense, let me intreat you to renew the inquiry, by the aid of some additional tests. They may be comprised in a few plain and pointed interrogations.

In the first place, let me ask—Has your heart been deeply impressed by a consideration of the character and the work of the Lord Jesus Christ ?

“ Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” Will any man pretend that he loves God, while regardless of his unspeakable gift, the grand and chief expression of love divine ? Can any man love God, and not love his incarnate and beloved Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person ? “ If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ,” said the inspired Apostle, “ let him be Anathema Maranatha”—subject to the irreversible and soul-withering curse, at the Redeemer’s second coming. Consider, then, the interrogation three times addressed to Peter by his risen Lord, as pointedly addressed to thee—“ Lovest

thou me?" Happy indeed thou art, and happy thou shalt ever be, if in truth thou canst say with Peter,—“Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee.”

In the next place, permit me to ask—Has obedience to the will of God become your pleasure and delight?

“If ye love me,” said Jesus, “keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father; and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.” Certain it is that “his commandments are not grievous.” In what light, then, do they appear to you? Do you “esteem them concerning all things to be right, and do you hate every false way?” Can you sincerely say, with the Psalmist, “Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it?” Do you rejoice to find that the commandment is exceeding spiritual, and “exceeding broad;” extending not only to the actions of every man, but also to his secret motives, his unseen propensities, his concealed dispositions, and his most transient thoughts? Do you, not only in your judgment fully approve, but in your heart cordially love, all its extensive requirements? Do you study the sacred scriptures, that you may know and do the whole will of God; and do you humbly supplicate that promised

grace, which can work in you to will and to do according to his good pleasure?

Let me add one more inquiry:—Has the love of the present world been deposed from the throne of your heart?

“Love not the world,” said the Apostle John, “neither the things that are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”—“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” How affecting ought to be the thought, that this present transient world should be loved more than Him who made it; and that the little insignificant portion of the world, which may have been allotted for our temporary use, should be valued more than the supreme and all-sufficient good! Is it to be endured, that a little gold, or any thing which a little gold can purchase, should be loved more ardently than the imperishable treasures of heaven, or the loving-kindness of Him who has those treasures at his disposal, and who is ready to bestow them even on the undeserving, and on the rebellious? Can the love of God dwell in that heart, in which the love of the world continues to reign? Can such a heart be, at the same time, the temple of the Holy Spirit? Oh, is it not rather the temple of Mammon? Is it not rather the Pantheon,



in which is worshipped every idol that a vain imagination has invested with attractive attributes, and a depraved heart has deified and served with idolatrous prostration of spirit!—Have, then, all these competitors for your homage and affection been completely proscribed and abjured; and is it your constant and prevailing desire, to be no longer “conformed to this present world, but to be transformed by the renewing of your minds;” that, loving God with all your heart, you may serve him with all your strength? If such be, indeed, the state of your heart towards God, cultivate the liveliest gratitude for the implantation of this heavenly principle in a soil, in which it could not possibly have been of spontaneous growth; and seek that promised influence, without which it can never reach maturity, nor even continue in life. “Praying,” then, “in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life.”

In conclusion, let me observe,

*Thirdly*, that if there be the absence of love to God, there is cause for instantaneous alarm.

In the heart of every man who stands convicted at the bar of conscience, of having lived, and of still living, without love to the best of all Beings, there should assuredly be awakened such

reflections, as are expressed in some forcible passages which I shall borrow, without feeling the need of an apology, from the incomparable Howe:—"Oh, what a soul have I, that can love any thing else, that can love trifles, that can love sin, but cannot love God or Christ, the most desirable good of souls! What a monster in the creation of God, is this soul of mine!"—"Oh, my soul, thou hast in thee other valuable things: thou hast understanding in thee; judgment in thee; wit in thee; perhaps learning and considerable acquirements; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. How great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! The one thing necessary thou wantest; thou hast every thing but what thou wantest more than any thing, more than all things. And Oh, my soul, what is to become of thee; where art thou to have thy eternal abode? To what regions of horror, and darkness, and woe, art thou going? What society can be fit for thee? No lover of God!—No lover of God! What society, then, can be fit for thee, but that of infernal accursed spirits, that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy, vital light, shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, Oh my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom; thy want of love to God is thy

doom, creates thee a present hell, and shews to what place thou belongest !”

“ Let, then, a due fear and solicitude be set on work in thee: for consider thyself as one shortly to be arraigned before the supreme tribunal, and remember that this is the critical point, upon which thy judgment turns:—this is a trial upon the most fundamental point; for as all the law is comprehended in love, if thou be found guilty in this point, that thou wast no lover of God, thou wilt be convicted of having been a perpetual underminer of his whole government, and of the whole frame of his law, a disloyal creature, rebellious and false to the God that made thee!—It may be, thy want of love to God was heretofore a great secret; but now out comes the secret,—disclosed to that vast assembly, angels and men! Here was a creature, a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the divine bounty and goodness, so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible shew! And dost thou think, that all the loyal creatures, that shall be spectators and auditors in that great day, will not all conceive a just and a loyal indignation against one convicted of not loving God, that gave him breath and all things ?”

“ And yet do not despair. God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, that sin may not

be imputed. He is in Christ, to captivate souls to his love. He is in Christ, to conquer enmity, to subdue disaffected hearts. Therefore, do not despair. Despair that ever you can be happy without loving God, but do not despair of being brought to love him. You have to do with him who is the element of love, the God of love, the fountain at once both of loveliness and love!—Apply yourselves, then, to him who is incarnate love. Turn yourselves towards him; open your souls to him, and say to him: ‘Lord, flow in with all the mighty powers of thine own love upon my soul: mollify this obdurate heart, and turn it into love.’ He can quickly do it, and draw thee into union with himself, so that thou shalt dwell in God who is love, and God shall dwell in thee. Then the foundations are surely laid, for all thy future duty, and all thy future felicity. Then how pleasantly wilt thou obey, and how blessedly wilt thou enjoy God for ever and ever!”

## LECTURE VII.

### THE OPERATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HOLINESS IN THE EXERCISE OF SELF-GOVERNMENT.

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#### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE THOUGHTS.

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JEREM. IV. 14.

*How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within  
thee ?*

WHEN this pointed interrogation was addressed to Jerusalem and to Judah, their Chaldean invaders were about to spread desolation over the land, as the punishment decreed by God for iniquities, which they were still unwilling to abandon. The rapid approach of Nebuchadnezzar, and his devastating army, is represented as combining the fierceness of the lion, and the swiftness of the eagle, with the resistless force of the whirlwind, when suddenly the heavens are overspread with darkening and portentous clouds. "The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place, to make this land

desolate ; and thy cities shall be laid waste without an inhabitant.—Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind : his horses are swifter than eagles. Woe unto us, for we are spoiled!” One way of deliverance, and only one, yet remained within the limits of possibility. That way might have been opened by true repentance and unfeigned contrition, by the abandonment of sin, and the purification of the heart. To this method of averting the judgments of their offended God, and of arresting the progress of those enemies, who menaced them with captivity and death, they are faithfully and affectionately urged.—“ O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?” There had commenced at Jerusalem some appearance of external reformation ; but the hearts of its inhabitants retained a defiling love of sin, and a prevailing inclination to vile idolatry : vain thoughts, evil desires, and debasing affections, still obtained a dwelling-place, as welcome guests, even in their inmost souls. Not more inimical to the peace and safety of Jerusalem, were vain and evil thoughts, than are such thoughts to your best interests and to mine. Be assured that the right regulation of the thoughts enters deeply and essentially into the nature of personal holiness and happiness.

Favour me, then, with your unremitting attention, while I endeavour to exhibit—

FIRST, The importance of the right government of the Thoughts: and

SECONDLY, The most effectual means of securing this important object.

FIRST, Let me direct your regard to the importance of acquiring and maintaining the due government of the Thoughts.

*First*, then, let it be considered, that the absence of good thoughts is itself a sufficient ground of condemnation at the bar of God.

Of the unrighteous and unholy it is said—“God is not in all their thoughts;” and is not *this* ample evidence of the prevailing character of their minds and hearts? Must it not be a “carnal mind,” and must it not be a hardened heart, in which the thought of God can find no place? Must not the love of God be altogether absent from that heart which gives no entertainment, no dwelling-place, even to the thought of his character and his claims? Is it possible for a man to love God, and yet to spend day after day, without cherishing any thoughts of God? What ideas are we to form of the man who spends his days without any grateful recollections of the divine goodness, without any admiring delight in the divine perfections, without any solicitude to enjoy the divine favour,

and without any desire to promote the divine glory? That the love of the blessed God dwells not in his heart, is absolutely certain. The God in whose hands his breath is, and in whom are all his springs of existence and capacity and enjoyment, he has not glorified, even in thought, or purpose, or desire! Let every one, then, listen to the voice of conscience, while summoned to answer the question—Is it I, whose mental character, whose prevailing habits of thought have been thus convicted of a radical and most alarming defect?

Let it be considered,

*Secondly*, That the human mind, while unrenewed, is habitually disposed to the indulgence of thoughts positively vain and evil.

In every human mind which continues unrenewed, not receiving, because not desiring, the control of the sanctifying Spirit, vain and evil thoughts exert an entire ascendancy. Thus it was in the world before the flood; and the record of human depravity at that early period might be adopted by the historian of the age in which we live:—"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." It is to the heart that the scrutinizing and all-pervading eye of the Omniscient God is chiefly directed. "The Lord



searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts."—"Man looketh on the outward appearance," and the reason is sufficiently clear;—he cannot look beyond. He can form his judgment only by external indications. The man of most profound sagacity can do no more. He may mark, with quickness of discernment, the unstudied action, or the casual word, or the expressive eye, or the voiceless lip which betrays an emotion in part suppressed: he may deduce, by his acuteness of observation, many an inference which may not mislead; and he may obtain, not unfrequently, an insight into character, which he knows how to value and how to improve. But the observer, although of most penetrating glance and most commanding intellect, and most deeply versed in the knowledge of human nature, may be, and often is, deceived. It is probable, that even the subtle spirit that "deceiveth the whole world," by the ever-varied artifices of seduction, is sometimes himself deceived; and, extensive as must be his knowledge of the human heart, he can have, I conceive, no power at all of ascertaining its thoughts and feelings, except in so far as they are expressed or betrayed by certain intelligible indications. Omniscience is no attribute of Satan, nor of any being but Jehovah. In language which no creature can appropriate, does the Father of spirits say,

"I the Lord search the heart." And He who uttered these words, said also—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" What, then, must the eye of God discern in every unrenewed heart? What must there be presented to the eye of the Omniscient, in the compass of one single day, in the interior of an unregenerate mind? Say—or rather think—what has been sometimes the history of your thoughts within the space of a single hour? Of what character were the subjects on which they were employed? Of what nature were the ideas suggested—cherished—pursued? What was their tendency; and had they been embodied in action, or even expressed in words, what would have been the sentiments awakened in the minds of those to whose approbation you attach a value? Consider, then, that your heart was, at the very moment, "naked and open in the sight of Him with whom you have to do."

Let it be observed,

*Thirdly*, That it is the characteristic of the renewed mind to cherish good thoughts.

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." Such is the requirement of Him who "waiteth to be gracious, and delighteth in mercy," but who cannot behold impurity of thought without holy and indignant displeasure. What is the repentance required

of the man, who would become a recipient of forgiving mercy, but a change of mind, of which the very first element is a change of Thought? The very first step of the sinner's return to God, is described with equal simplicity and correctness in such words as these:—"I thought on my ways and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The next gradation of progress may be exhibited in these stronger terms;—"I hate vain thoughts nor can I endure that any longer they should lodge within me." A stage of still greater advancement appears indicated by such expressions as these: "I thought of thy loving-kindness in the midst of thy temple." And if this be regarded as the representation of a state of mind at one particular period, and not a direct assertion in reference to the prevailing habit of thought, we have at least an interesting and characteristic specimen of a mind truly renewed, in those words of the Psalmist:—"In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." Oh! this is indeed the language of a spiritual mind; of a heart right with God. Who can estimate the value; who can describe the delight of this spirituality of mind! "They that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. Now, to be carnally

minded, is death; but to be spiritually minded, is life and peace."

Let it be considered,

*Fourthly*, That it is in the thoughts of the mind that both dispositions and actions originate.

"As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" in the course and character of his life. The thoughts of the mind have been justly compared to the blossoms which appear on a tree in the vernal season of the year. Many of these blossoms prematurely fall off; but from those which remain springs all the fruit which the tree yields: so are there many thoughts which transiently occupy the mind, without leaving any permanent trace, but from the thoughts which are cherished and retained spring all the dispositions of the heart, all the words of the lips, and all the actions of the life. It was worthy, then, of the wisest of men, and worthy of the Spirit of wisdom under whose dictation he wrote, most urgently to enforce the safe-keeping of the heart:—"Keep thy heart with all diligence; (or "above all keeping;") for out of it are the issues of life." There is no member of our body, there is no organ of sensation, there is no faculty of intellect, there is no avenue of feeling, over which it is not important to exercise a watchful care; but more important still is the guardianship of the heart, whence are all the issues of life. Have you studied the history

of the inner man? Have you, with the eye of self-inspection, carefully traced the process which commences with a rising thought, and terminates in an important action? Have you watched the influence of the suggestion—the incentive—the anticipation of consequences—the suspense—and the final resolve? If you are familiar with processes such as these, and with the correspondent results, it is unnecessary for me to make any further demand on your time, with a view to demonstrate the importance of the right government of the Thoughts.

Let your attention be now transferred,

SECONDLY, To the most effectual means of attaining and preserving the due government of the Thoughts.

*First*, There must be the attainment and the exercise of a good conscience.

The conscience is designed to be the keeper of the mind and heart. Its appointed office is that of a sentinel to guard the avenues of approach, and to sound the alarm at the first advances of an enemy. But never can the conscience of sinful and degenerate man be competent for such an office, unless the disqualifying influence of guilt be removed, by the efficacy of "the blood which cleanseth from all sin." The heart must remain an impure fountain whence can issue only polluted streams, unless it be purified by the virtue of

atoning blood. It is when "the heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience," as it regards the sins which are past, that we are prepared and disposed so to "exercise ourselves as to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." The ineffable and serene repose of spirit which arises from faith in the great propitiation, is conducive to the delicate sensibility which recoils from the contact of defilement, even in the images of thought. Let the language of the verse which contains our text remind us, that if it be our desire to guard against the intrusion of vain and evil thoughts, our hearts must be cleansed from the guilt and pollution of sin.—"Wash thine heart from wickedness that thou mayest be saved. How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?"

*Secondly*, The mind must habitually derive from the word of God its best materials of thought.

"I hate vain thoughts," said the Psalmist, "but thy law do I love." He knew too much of the tendencies of his own mind, and too much of the universal laws of intellectual being, to wish, that the expulsion of vain thoughts should be followed by an uninteresting vacuity of thought. This, were it possible, would be undesirable. It would be a dull and dreary blank in existence. It would be, in the lowest sense, *existence*; it

would not deserve the name of *life*. But the desire of the man after God's own heart was, that the place vacated by thoughts which were vain, might be filled by thoughts of substantial excellence. This is indeed the best and the only preservative from thoughts decidedly evil. Could the mind be rendered simply vacant, soon would the tempter pour in a strong and rapid tide of his own impure suggestions. The absence of thoughts which are good he regards as the state most favourable to the entrance of thoughts which are evil ; so that without any perversion of the meaning of Scripture we may apply to such a state of mind, our Saviour's description of the inducements presented to the evil spirit, to occupy the residence into which he anticipates an unresisting facility of admission :—" When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he wandereth over parched deserts in search of a resting-place.\* And not finding any, he saith, I will return to my house whence I came ; and being come, he findeth it empty, swept and furnished ; (as if it directly invited his entrance, and was even prepared for his occupation :) whereupon he goeth and bringeth with him seven other spirits, more wicked than himself, and having entered, there they dwell." " The heart," says an eloquent preacher, " will not consent to be deso-

\* Dr. Campbell's Translation.

lated.—Though the room which is in it may change one inmate for another, it cannot be left void, without the pain of most intolerable suffering.—It could not bear to be left in a state of waste and cheerless insipidity. It would revolt against its own emptiness.—Such is the grasping tendency of the human heart that it must have a something to lay hold of—and which, if wrested away without the substitution of another something in its place, would leave a void and a vacancy as painful to the mind, as hunger is to the natural system. It may be dispossessed of one object, but it cannot be desolated of all.—A man will no more consent to the misery of being without an object, because that object is a trifle, or of being without a pursuit, because that pursuit terminates in some frivolous or fugitive acquirement, than he will voluntarily submit himself to the torture, because that torture is to be of short duration.”\*

How much of wisdom, then, was there in the method resorted to by the Psalmist, with a view to the right government of his thoughts, and how exquisite is the beauty of expression, with which he has described the intellectual and devotional habits of his mind, in the hundred and thirty-ninth Psalm:—“How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!” Let

\* Dr. Chalmers.



us pause a moment, before we proceed to the verse which follows. What can present such admirable and delightful materials, to occupy the thoughts of man, as the book which contains the thoughts of God! Might not the Bible be entitled, — “The Thoughts of God?” Is it not replete with the contemplations of the Eternal Mind? And what are the lofty and the glorious subjects which they present to our regard? They are the attributes of his own nature—the laws which take their origin from his own rectitude—the purposes of mercy emanating from his own love, and extending to rebels against his throne—the mediatorial scheme of redemption, illustrating, in full-orbed glory, the perfections of his own adorable character—the revelations of a future and eternal world of blessedness! Having obtained on these subjects (though less clearly and less fully than we of the gospel day) the thoughts of God; we wonder not that the Psalmist should have exclaimed,—“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God; how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee!”—With the thoughts and counsels of Jehovah in his mind, “he lay down at night to rest, and when he awoke in the morning, his thoughts naturally recurred to the pleasing theme; he began where he had left off, and found himself in heart and

soul, still present with God, still ruminating on him and his works. The mercies of heaven, in the redemption of the church, by the sufferings and exaltation of the true David—how precious are they to believers! How great is the sum, how far exceeding all human arithmetic to number them! Let them be to us the constant subjects of contemplation, admiration, and thanksgiving, day and night; and let death find us engaged in an employment, which when we awake, and arise from the grave, we shall resume and prosecute to eternity, in the presence of God! ”\*

*Thirdly*, There must be earnest prayer, that our thoughts may be guided and controlled by the influences of the Holy Spirit.

“ When He, the spirit of truth is come,” said Jesus to his disciples, “ he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.” Now the acquisition of knowledge, and the habitual remembrance of that which is acquired, are usually the result of those two leading operations of the intellect, on which the character of the thoughts chiefly depends. Consider, then, O believer in Jesus, how much you are authorized to expect, in relation to the right government of the thoughts, from the influence so faithfully promised. When

\* Bishop Harne's Commentary.

you take up the Bible and read some selected paragraphs, or a chapter in regular course, "the spirit of wisdom and revelation" can steadily fix your thoughts (too often apt to wander) on some truths of vital importance: he can extend and correct and elevate your views, and deepen your impressions, of those truths which you knew but imperfectly before: he can give a new direction and a wider range to your ideas, and a new and glowing impulse to the best affections of your hearts. When, at the next return of the hour of retired devotion, you resume the study of the sacred book, some other truths, of no inferior interest, may be similarly unfolded to your view, and rendered equally influential in awakening the purest affections of the soul. Suppose this to be the history of every day; and suppose the truth into which you have been thus guided, in the commencement of every day, to be held in remembrance throughout the course of the day; will there not be acquired more and more of an invaluable facility, in the right government of the thoughts? And is the expectation of this extravagant, or unreasonable? Is it too lofty an expectation for a mind which has already become a temple of the Holy Spirit? And "know ye not that (if christians) ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Will not, then, the very consideration of the character and

influence of the divine inhabitant, become an incentive to purity of thought? Surely vain thoughts cannot be permitted or tolerated in the temple of the indwelling Deity! Let there be poured forth, then, in importunate prayer, the most fervent petitions, that "the thoughts of the heart may be cleansed by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit."

*Fourthly*, There must be the diligent culture of all holy affections:

While it is true, that the thoughts give excitement to the affections, it is equally true, that the affections give excitement to the thoughts. The affections are the wings on which the intellect itself is sustained, in the soaring elevation of its flight, above the regions of sense. Even in the pursuits of literature and of science, it would be vain, to expect a rapid or a pleasurable progress, without the stimulus arising from a predilection of taste, and a feeling of powerful attachment. How much more is that incentive required in the application of the mind to subjects decidedly spiritual. Would you, then, acquire an aptitude for the employment of the thoughts, on things unseen and eternal? Would you attain an increasing degree of facility, in disengaging the powers of thought from all earth-sprung cares and entanglements? Would you rise, as on the wings of eagles, to a region more pure and serene, that you may contemplate, in an un-

clouded atmosphere, "the things which are above?"—Be it your solicitous care, to "keep your hearts in the love of God," by "praying in the Holy Ghost." Be assured, that when most deeply "rooted and grounded in love," you will be able to put forth the best energies of your minds, in endeavouring to *comprehend* what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to *know* the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge!

*Fifthly*, We must habitually realize the divine inspection of our thoughts.

Suppose that your unexpressed and most secret thoughts could be ascertained by a fellow-creature, as soon as they found a place in your mind. Suppose that some one individual had certain means of knowing your thoughts, over which you could exercise no control. What emotions would you feel in his presence! What intense anxiety would you betray, as well as feel, to repress the very first risings of thoughts, which you might deem unworthy of your character, and, in his estimation, disgraceful! But are you not, at every moment, and in every situation, whether acting, or speaking, or thinking, under the inspection of an omniscient and omnipresent eye? And is it not with Him, as "the Judge of all," that, in a sense inapplicable to any human observer, "you have especially to do?" Let, then, the

emphatic words of Hagar dwell "for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of your hearts"—"Thou God seest me!" Enter deeply into the spirit which regulated the thoughts of the Psalmist:—"O Lord, thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting, and mine uprising; thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways!"

*Lastly*, It is requisite, that we frequently take a retrospect of the history of our thoughts, for the purpose of self-examination.

With unfeigned sincerity may we say to Him, who knows the recesses of our hearts, far better than we know them ourselves—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see (and enable *me* to see) if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting." Awfully hypocritical would it be to offer these petitions, without the most determined efforts of scrutinizing self-inspection. At the close of every day, and still more strenuously at the close of every ample period of our time, let us call ourselves to render an account of the employment of our thoughts. Let the detection of evil thoughts produce its proper and legitimate effects. Let it humble us in the dust of abasement; let it conduct us

to the cross of the Redeemer; let it rouse us to greater watchfulness in guarding against the intrusion of vain and evil thoughts; and let it urge us to more earnest prayer that the God of all grace would effectually control and sanctify the thoughts of our hearts, by "working in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

In concluding this discourse, let me suggest the inquiry, whether the considerations which have been adduced, ought not to excite in the minds of some who have been now addressed, serious misgivings and apprehensions, with regard to their character in the sight of God. Does not conscience, at this moment, bring against you a most appalling charge? Does it not charge you with innumerable iniquities of thought? Does it not charge you with the additional guilt of thinking lightly of those iniquities? You cannot deny, that sins of thought are the very spring and fountain of sins in conduct. You cannot deny, that many of your sinful thoughts have been rapidly maturing into principles of action, and have wanted only the force of a besetting temptation to bring them into practical development. You cannot deny, that among the countless multitude of thoughts, which have crowded the entire space between the morning and the evening of many a day, there have been instances in which

not one single thought of God, of Christ, or of eternity obtained admission! Yet is it not specified, as one of the decided characteristics of those who are unfit for heaven, and exposed to endless woe, that "God is not in all their thoughts?" And is it not expressly said, by the authority of Him who searcheth the heart—that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations; (and therefore all the individuals) that *forget God!*" Oh, what must be the accumulation of the guilt contracted, if with respect to sins of thought alone, a charge can be substantiated, of a nature sufficiently heinous in the sight of God, to require a sentence of eternal banishment from his presence! Hasten, then, to his throne of grace, lest he summon thee, at an unexpected hour, to his throne of judgment! Supplicate, in the name of the only Saviour, deliverance from the wrath to come! Pray that the *thoughts of thine heart*, as well as the sins of thy life, may be forgiven thee. And, Oh, what an inducement to offer that prayer, is the assurance, that with the God whom thou hast insulted and forgotten "there is forgiveness!"—"Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his *thoughts*; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Let those vain thoughts be for ever abandoned, which fostered vain hopes, and delusive expectations.



No longer expose to final condemnation your immortal soul, by trusting in yourselves, as though you were righteous, or by neglecting to seek an interest, by faith, in the righteousness of Jesus. Never let it be absent from your minds, that "he was made sin for us though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." "Let, then, the word of Christ,—the glorious gospel which bringeth salvation,—dwell in you richly, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Let it be the purifier of your heart, the regulator of your thoughts. Let the treasures of truth divine be amply stored within your hearts, and let them be employed as the materials of pleasurable thought, "when you are sitting in the house, and when you are walking by the way, and when you are lying down, and when you are rising up."—"Then will the peace of God which passeth all understanding keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus;" to whom be glory for ever, Amen.

## LECTURE VIII.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DESIRES.

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#### PSALM XXXVII. 4.

*Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall  
give thee the desires of thine heart.*

THE desires of the heart comprise all those varieties of emotion, which connect the thoughts of the mind with the actions of the life. They are susceptible of numberless gradations of strength, from the incipient tendency, of which the mind is scarcely conscious, to the resistless impetuosity of passion. Our passions themselves, even when excited to the utmost intensity, are only the desires of the heart, under another name; for "desires rise into passions whenever they are vivid, whenever they are permanent." It is, then, to a subject by no means wanting in importance or interest that I would now direct your attention: it is to that Government of the Desires, which is essential to personal holiness. Let me endeavour to place before you, both the Inducements by which we should be urged to the attempt, and the Principles by which that attempt should be regulated.

Let your attention be given,

FIRST, To the Inducements by which we should be effectually urged to aim at the due Government of our Desires.

*First*, Consider how much of our mental existence is spent in giving exercise and indulgence to the desires of the heart.

Consider how many of the thoughts and feelings of every day move on in the channel of wishes and hopes and expectations. And what are all these movements of the mind but certain modifications of desire? What is a wish but a feeble and idle desire;—an indolent aspiration after something which we deem desirable, but which we have no reason to regard as actually attainable? And what is hope—that balm of life—that medicine of the soul—but the encouragement given to desire, under a strong probability of the attainment of the object? And what is expectation, but the cheering confidence of hope, when the strength of probability, rising still higher, makes apparently a near approach to certainty itself? If, then, these states of mind, which make up so large a part of our daily consciousness, are so many gradations of desire, how evident is it, that on the due regulation of our desires, the happiness of life must depend! And could human life be happy, were it possible to effect an entire suppression of these longings after some object not yet attained,—

this "reaching forth" to the things of futurity? Could this be effected, even for a single hour, there would be during that dreary interval a perfect stagnation of feeling, a paralysis of the inner man, a death-like torpor of soul. On the other hand, it is equally impossible to be happy, if the desires attain an impetuosity which spurns control, or go forth with eagerness after objects which deserve not the energy of the mind. Is that man happy, whose desires are unreasonable, and extravagant, and intemperate? On the contrary, is not he alone pursuing the path of happiness, who is ever on his guard against the ascendancy of desires, which are either in themselves unjustifiable, or calculated to issue in disappointment?

*Secondly*, Consider how many of the most fearful evils of life may be traced to ill-regulated desires.

What is the history of the origin of evil and the entrance of misery into the world we inhabit? Examine the record of the first temptation, and the first transgression. The fruit forbidden by God, was *represented* as desirable, and was *regarded* as desirable. The desire thus entertained, gathering strength by indulgence, at length impelled to the daring and rebellious act. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to

the eyes, and a tree *to be desired* to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." Thus did the desire of that which was forbidden, bring "death into our world, and all our woe."

And is not the history of the first temptation and the first offence, the embryo-history of all temptations and of all iniquities? The rising and the strengthening desire of that which is interdicted, is itself evil; and criminal, in a still higher degree, is the action in which the desire terminates. An illustration of the tendency of such desires may be derived from the emphatic assertion of the Apostle Paul, in reference to a principle of action, than which scarcely any one of mightier operation is to be found in the heart of man. It is the desire of gain. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. Wherefore, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some have coveted after, (or *eagerly desired*;) they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Who can describe the agonizing stings which

have been infixed in the conscience, and the envenomed darts which have pierced the soul, of many a man, whose God was Mammon, and whose ruling passion was the love of gold! The captive that digs in the mine, and the slave that is chained to the galley, are not condemned to baser toil, than the man who, at all hazards both of soul and body, "*will* be rich." He shares their labour, but not their repose. They have no part in his gains, but neither have they any part in the agonies of his guilt. And which of all the unhallowed desires that have place in the depraved heart of man, would not justify a representation, bearing some resemblance to the forcible and vivid statement of the Apostle? Every one of them is in its nature restless, and disquieting, and tormenting. If it gain ascendancy, without obtaining indulgence, its wretched victim is reduced to the situation of one who suffers torture by the infliction of another; if it grasp the object at the expense of conscience, its victim is doomed to the still more agonizing torture which is self-inflicted. What then must be the gnawing of "the worm that dieth not," in the world unvisited by hope!

But let it be supposed, that the desires of the heart impel not to any course of action which conscience loudly condemns. Let it be supposed, that there is even a semblance of correctness in

their character, so that no object is pursued or desired which the law of God appears absolutely to forbid. Still if happiness be desired and expected from sources of merely earth-born pleasure, assuredly the pursuit must terminate in the pangs of most pitiable disappointment. Thus it was even with Solomon himself, on completing the grand experiment, by which may be ascertained the extent, to which the things of this world can contribute to the satisfaction of the desires of the heart. Hear his own spontaneous confession, which he was directed to record, for the instruction and the warning of every succeeding age :—" I made me great works ; I builded me houses ; I planted me vineyards ; I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits :—I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces ; I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts :—and *whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them* ; I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do ; and behold all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." There was an adaptation in many of these things to impart *a certain degree* of blameless pleasure, and innocent delight ; but

he had calculated on a result of *supreme satisfaction*, instead of subordinate enjoyment; and such was the consequent bitterness of soul, arising from disappointed hopes, that in the very zenith of his prosperity he added;—"therefore I hated life."

*Thirdly*, Consider how much importance is attached to the character of our desires by Him who searcheth the heart.

Brief as is the compendium of moral duty contained in the decalogue, one of the ten commandments aims expressly at the right regulation of the desires. "Thou shalt not covet," was one of the prohibitory mandates written, by the finger of God, upon the tablets of stone, and designed to be written on the more susceptible tablet of the heart. It was as if Jehovah had said,—“Not only shalt thou abstain from *taking* that which is not thine own, but thou shalt abstain also from *desiring* that which is not thine own.” And it is deserving of remark, that it was this very command, which conveyed to the Apostle Paul a clearer view of the extensive and spiritual requirements of the divine law, than he had derived from all its other precepts. “I had not known sin,” said he, “but by the law:”—“for *strong desire* I had not known to be sin unless the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.”\* Has the holy law been understood and

\* Macnight's Translation.



applied by *us* in all this latitude of meaning? If we are indeed aware of the nature of the obedience which it demands, Oh, what materials of self-condemnation must we find in the retrospect of every day! What profound ignorance should we betray both of ourselves, and of the law which is just and holy, were we to flatter ourselves with the delusive notion of some innate or habitual goodness of heart! If, in the sight of God, evil desire, of every gradation, is a sin which deserves his anger, what need have we to flee for refuge to him who came into the world to save sinners, "lest we perish from the way, even when his wrath is kindled but a little."

Nor let it escape our remembrance, that the righteous Judge takes cognizance not only of desires positively evil, but also of the absence of such as he justly requires us to cherish. A characteristic description of the wicked is contained in these few words:—"They say to God, depart from us, for we *desire not* the knowledge of thy ways:—what is the Almighty that we should serve him; and what profit is there if we pray unto him?" Is it possible for human language to be more expressive of criminal alienation of spirit, and of a state of heart at enmity against God? Equally decisive of a state of heart "right with God," are many strains of expression which indicate the character of the prevailing desires.

"Whom have I in heaven but thee," said the man after God's own heart, "and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever."—"The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee."—"One thing have I desired of the Lord; that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple."

These considerations, then, it may be presumed, are sufficient to exhibit the urgency of the Inducements by which we should be impelled to aim at the right regulation of our desires.

Let me now direct your views,

SECONDLY, To the Principles by which our attempts should be regulated.

*First*, Let us have recourse to infallible guidance and influence.

Pitiably uninstructed are the moralising guides who have not derived their system, in all its entirety, from the volume of revelation. An eloquent lecturer on the Philosophy of the Human Mind has given the following enumeration of the desires which he deems natural and universal:—"A desire of continued existence, without any immediate regard to the pleasure which it may yield; a desire of pleasure, considered directly as

mere pleasure; a desire of action; a desire of society; a desire of knowledge; a desire of power, direct, as in ambition, or indirect, as in avarice; a desire of the affection or esteem of those around us; a desire of glory; a desire of the happiness of others; and *a desire of the unhappiness of those whom we hate.*" The last of this specification is represented, not only as having existence in the human mind, but as deriving origin from the very Author of our being. "As the whole system of things is at present constituted," affirms Dr. Brown, "it is not of less importance, that man should be susceptible of *malevolence* on certain occasions, than that he should be susceptible of benevolence in the general concerns of life; and man, accordingly, is endowed with the susceptibility of both.—The desire of evil to others is to be measured, in our moral estimates, by the nature of the brief or permanent hatred in which it may have originated; and is allowable, therefore, only in the cases in which the hatred is truly a feeling that is necessary in such circumstances for the protection of this social scene." But is malevolence, under any circumstances necessary, or is it salutary, or is it right? Can it be approved, can it have been implanted in our nature, by Him who made us, and who originally constituted our nature holy? Is such a desire justifiable by the letter or the spirit of any moral precept contained in the word

of God, or by any interpretation of the divine law given by our divine Master or by his Apostles? The authority of heathen moralists might be pleaded in its favour, and the authority also of the Jewish Scribes and Elders; but what saith our Lord and Lawgiver? "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy; but I say unto you, Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.—Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect."

But is it sufficient for us simply to know what is right, "and what it is which God requireth of us?" This would be sufficient, were our hearts conformed, in every desire, to the holy law of God. But which of us has not need to say, with the most painful remembrance of past delinquencies, "Lord, have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this law!" Even this inclination and desire can have no permanent place, except in the heart renewed by the Spirit of God. "The carnal mind," affirms the Apostle Paul, is "enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then

they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." The state of unregeneracy, the Apostle represents as the condition in which men are habitually "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind;" and he adds the awakening representation of their being "by nature the children of wrath."—"If," adds the Apostle, "ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds (and consequently the *desires*) of the body, ye shall live." Who, then, really believing these statements, will not feel the indispensable necessity of the aid of the Holy Spirit, to sanctify and to regulate the desires of his heart? Who that knows human nature, and that knows himself, will think it possible to make any commencement, or any progress, in the arduous work of the right government of his desires, without the renovating influence of that grace, which can work in us "both to will and to do" according to the good pleasure of our God?

*Secondly,* Let us cherish those desires which in their very indulgence will promote our happiness.

In order to this, what better directory can there be, than that which is given us in our text: "Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give

thee the desires of thine heart." What is the import of this comprehensive counsel? It is as if the inspired Psalmist had said: "Direct thy views and thy affections to the Author of being and of blessedness. No longer employ thyself in 'hewing out broken cisterns, which can hold no water;' but resort, with ardent desire and grateful delight, to 'the fountain of living water.' Delight and solace thyself in the admiring contemplation of the chief good, and the chief joy of all who have discovered the secret of happiness." And is there not to be found the highest delight in the manifestations of divine glory, and especially of divine love? Is there not delight in beholding the justice which governs the world, and the holiness which adorns the throne of Deity, blended with the mercy which "blotteth out transgressions," and "the love which passeth knowledge?" Surely there is delight ineffable in being authorised to say, "This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our guide even unto death.—O God, I will praise thee: thou wast angry with me; but thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me. Behold, the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation!"

Cherish such delight as this; and its effect, in regulating the desires of the heart, will be equally powerful and salutary. It will induce a

progressively ardent desire to discern more of "the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ;" to spend your days more constantly in the light of his countenance; and to attain higher qualifications for his service on earth, and for his immediate presence in heaven. Now, if in these desires themselves there are elements of true delight, so also will there be in the studies and the efforts and the prayers and the thanksgivings which they will dictate, and still more in the progressive attainment of the things desired. And in all this there is no danger of mortifying and heart-withering disappointment. When we desire these things, and ask them at the throne of the heavenly grace, we desire and we ask according to the will of God; "and this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he heareth us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

*Thirdly*, Let us cherish those desires which will most effectually repress and exclude the evil inclinations of the heart.

Delight thyself in the Lord, as thy chief good, and then thy prevailing desire will be to glorify thy God, by every affection of thy heart, and every action of thy life. Delight thyself thus in the Lord, and thy most pleasurable desire and expectation for the future, will spring from the hope

of seeing God, and of being for ever with him. Thus wilt thou attain a spiritual mind, a heavenly temper, looking and aiming not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; remembering that the things which are seen are temporal, but that the things which are not seen are eternal. Thou wilt cultivate the desires and the affections of a pilgrim and stranger upon earth, "desiring a better, that is, a heavenly country;" and rejoicing in "the hope of the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away." Realizing the presence of an invisible God, and the prospect of an invisible world, thy heart will be brought under the transforming influence of that faith, which is "the confidence of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen." Actuated by this principle, thou wilt disentangle and divest thyself of every weight which would impede thy career, in running the race that is set before thee. Thus will thy conduct gradually approximate to that which, it may be presumed, would be the course of an angel's life, were one of the angels of heaven to become an incarnate inhabitant of earth; or rather it will bear a progressive resemblance to the course of life actually exhibited by incarnate Deity, when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among men, full of grace and truth; being holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners.



"The love of the world," it has been well observed, "cannot be expunged by a mere demonstration of the world's worthlessness. The heart cannot be prevailed upon to part with the world, by a simple act of resignation. If the throne which is placed there, *must* have an occupier, and the tyrant that now reigns has occupied it wrongfully, he may *not* leave a bosom which would rather detain him, than be left in desolation. But may he not give way to the lawful sovereign, appearing with every charm that can secure his willing admittance, and taking unto himself his great power to subdue the moral nature of man and to reign over it?—In this case there is something more than the mere displacement of an affection. There is the overbearing of one affection, by another. But to desolate his heart of all love for the things of the world, without the substitution of any love in its place, were to him a process of as unnatural violence, as to destroy all the things that he has in the world, and give him nothing in their room. So that if to love not the world, be indispensable to one's christianity, then the crucifixion of the old man is not too strong a term to mark that transition in his history, when all old things are done away, and all things are become new."\*

\* Dr. Chalmers.

*Lastly*, Let the strength of our desires be proportioned to the real value of the objects desired.

If, on this enlightened principle, our desires be regulated, we shall be placed beyond the danger of serious and overwhelming disappointment. If we delight supremely in God, and supremely desire his favour, then our desires of things, inferior in value, will be only of proportionate strength, and will be kept in due subordination. We shall not desire them as things essential to our happiness, but only as subsidiary. We shall desire them, only on the supposition of their being agreeable to the will of Him, in whom we place our felicity; so that could we ascertain that they were not, in his estimation, desirable for us, they would on that account cease to be objects of desire. We should be perfectly satisfied in the absence of that which it is not his will to bestow. "The very thing is even in this case done, which we should wish to be done." It accords with our heart's desire and prayer. We should be fully prepared to say to our Father in heaven:—"Lord, if thy wisdom, which is infinitely more than mine, see this thing to be not fit, deny me in this desire of mine."—And this general and habitual desire, which is the controller of every specific and occasional desire, cannot fail to be accomplished in favour of the man who delights supremely in the

Lord. He must, in the highest sense, succeed in obtaining the desires of his heart.

Let it be considered also, that if our supreme desire centre in God, it may be perfectly compatible with our best interests, that many inferior and subordinate desires should be granted. *That* description or degree of earthly good is incompatible with our spiritual prosperity, which we are inclined to over-value, and to seek with undue intensity of desire. It then becomes necessary to our welfare, that such an object should be withheld, lest it should attract the homage and attachment of heart, due only to the blessed God himself. But if it be desired only with the moderation and submissiveness of feeling, which ought ever to be cherished by the christian, it may be granted without injury to our best interests; and God may see fit to indulge this subordinate and well-regulated desire of the heart. It was, I conceive, with these views that the inspired Psalmist penned the words of the text, and of the other connected verses, which have reference to temporal as well as to spiritual blessings:—"Trust in the Lord and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed. Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass." His encouraging assurance appears to harmonize

with that given, in still more explicit language, by our blessed Redeemer:—"Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." And will not these secondary and super-added gifts be enjoyed with greater delight, from the very consideration of our having desired them, only in submission to the will of God, and of having received them as the expression of his paternal love?

Let me now conclude by reminding you, that the subject which has thus engaged our attention, should direct our views, beyond the scenes of this present world, to a future and eternal state. What is Heaven, but the world where the inhabitants *must* be happy, because their well-regulated desires no sooner arise in the mind than they meet their entire and appropriate gratification! And what is Hell, but the world where the inhabitants *must* be wretched, because their's is the torment of restless and unsatisfied desire! Their unquenchable thirst for happiness finds no relief; and "that ravenous appetite, which would be preying upon external objects that now fail, turns inward, and as an insatiable vulture, gnaws everlastingly the wretched soul itself." From that tremendous anguish may the God of salvation deliver every one of you! If this be, in truth, your own most earnest desire, and you have not yet fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set

before you in the gospel, lose not one single moment ; but flee from the wrath to come, and, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, “lay hold on eternal life.”

## LECTURE IX.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TEMPER.

COL. III. 12—14.

*Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any ; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.*

THE word *Temper* is usually employed to denote the prevailing spirit and disposition of the mind ; so that the *Government* of the Temper comprehends that habitual regulation of all the feelings, whether transient or permanent, which is most favourable to the discharge of duty, and to the enjoyment and diffusion of happiness. The attainment of that control, will be the happy result of the cultivation of those attractive and engaging qualities, which are delineated, with equal force and feeling, in the words we have

now read. Keeping then in view this admirable sketch of the christian temper, drawn by the hand of a master, under the guidance of direct inspiration, it shall be my object to set before you—

**FIRST,** The Motives which should effectually urge us to the cultivation of this Temper; and

**SECONDLY,** The best Methods of aiming at its attainment.

**FIRST,** Let us very briefly advert to the Motives which urge its cultivation.

I would remind you, then,

*First,* That the duty of controlling and governing the Temper in social intercourse, arises out of the grand and primary principles of the law of God.

“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself”—is the condensed and comprehensive precept, which embodies all the subordinate requirements essential to human happiness. Is it possible to love our neighbour without endeavouring to promote his peace and comfort? And shall we not strike at the very root of his peace and comfort, if, in the hours of social intercourse, we exercise no control over our temper and spirit? “There is a power in every individual, over the tranquillity of almost every individual. There are emotions, latent in the minds of those whom we meet, which a few words of ours may at any

time call forth; and the moral influence, which keeps this power over the uneasy feelings of others, under due restraint, is not the least important of the moral influences, in its relation to general happiness.—There are minds which can delight in exercising this cruel sway,—which rejoice in suggesting thoughts that may poison the confidence of friends, and render the very virtues that were loved, objects of suspicion to him who loved them. In the daily and hourly intercourse of human life, there are human beings, who exert their malicious skill in devising what subjects may be most likely to bring into the mind of him with whom they converse, the most mortifying remembrances;—and who are faithful in conveying to every one the whispers of unmerited scandal, of which, otherwise, he never would have heard, as he never could have suspected them; though they are careful to express sufficient indignation against the slanderer, and to bring forward as many grounds of suspicion against different individuals, as their fancy can call up.” Can you conceive of more direct, or more degrading, or more malignant violations of the law,—“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself?”

*Secondly,* Let it be considered, that the cultivation of the christian Temper will exert a most beneficial influence on our own happiness.

If an unquiet and fretful temper be a source



of perpetual annoyance to others, it is still more hostile to the bosom in which it dwells. It infixes the sting of a self-tormentor. It poisons the cup of every enjoyment. On the contrary, a spirit serene and contented has an habitual aptitude for delight, whenever pleasurable excitement occurs; and even in the absence of all foreign excitement has sources of internal delectation. This temper of mind, so desirable for its own sake, is intimately allied also with that fitness for the discharge of the various duties of life, without which they must become, not only difficult, but in a high degree irksome and oppressive.

On this preliminary part of our subject, (the considerations which are pertinent being obvious to all,) I shall detain you only by observing,

*Thirdly,* That the display of a christian Temper greatly adorns and recommends the gospel of Christ.

There prevails in society around us a disposition, of which we are scarcely entitled to complain, to compare and to contrast the man of the world with the professor of serious religion, whenever it may be thought, that the result of the comparison will prove disadvantageous to the latter. Shall there, then, be materials for eulogizing the character of those who make no pretensions to decided piety, on the ground of their

amiableness of temper, and gentleness of spirit; and shall there be ground for an impeachment of these who make a public profession of religion, as in these respects greatly inferior? Shall it be said, with any colour of truth, that not a few of them betray a disposition unyielding and unkind, uncharitable and severe, irascible and unforgiving, arbitrary and impetuous? "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." They are incalculably injurious to the souls of men. They arm the carnal and unrenewed mind with all the force of the most determined prejudice, against those who lay claim to the character of separatists from an ungodly world, and also against that truth which they profess to embrace. Oh! never let it escape your remembrance, my christian friends, that not only your own honour is at stake, but also the honour of the glorious cause of truth and holiness, to which you profess a devoted attachment. The honour of our Lord Jesus Christ requires you to adorn in all things the doctrine of his gospel; and how can it be more beautifully adorned, than by "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price!"—Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness and long-suffering;—and over all these things, as the connecting girdle of this spiritual attire,

put on the graceful and the attractive ornament of love. And let it be the love which "suffereth long and is kind; which envieth not; which vaunteth not itself; which is not puffed up; which doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; which beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things."

We are now, I trust, prepared to consider,

**SECONDLY,** The best methods of aiming at the cultivation of the christian Temper.

It seems to be the opinion of some, that a bad temper is an evil of such a nature, as almost to preclude the hope of amendment. This, however, is an opinion which would have disgraced a philosophic pagan; how much more a disciple of our Lord Jesus Christ! If it be the boast of philosophy, that it can effect much, and often has effected much, in the improvement of the natural temper, it is beyond all doubt the glory of christianity, that it can effect, and often has effected, incomparably more. With this encouraging conviction, let me proceed to suggest some scriptural advices for the due regulation of the temper.

*First,* Let it be the primary object of solicitude, that the heart be renewed and controlled, by the power of sanctifying grace.

Christian morals must have their foundation

in christian principles; and the effectual control of the temper must have its origin in the renovation of the heart, by the power of the regenerating Spirit. Not more true is it, that unless a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God, than it is true, that except a man be born again, he cannot display "the mind which was in Christ Jesus." He may, indeed, on philosophic principles, acquire a certain degree of control over the external indication of feelings, but never will the temper of his secret soul bear resemblance to that of our divine exemplar, or be conformed to the requirements of the law of love, unless it be formed and moulded by the influence of the gospel, and the power of renewing grace.

It is under this influence alone that genuine and unfeigned humility is cherished in any human heart; and where this grace of primary importance has no place in the mind, there can be no security for the due control of the temper, even for a single hour. Sins of temper usually spring from the sin of pride—that "root of bitterness," which produces so much bitter fruit. In every rank of life, man is apt greatly to overrate his own importance and his own claims. He is but the creature of yesterday; — a feeble, dependent, polluted, dying worm; and yet he is disposed to erect and elevate himself into a kind of subordinate deity; and having thus idolized himself, to

demand a correspondent homage from others. If they display not the respectful deference and the yielding spirit which he considers due to his character, or his station, or his talents, he betrays angry and indignant resentment. The Apostle, therefore, strikes at the very root of the evil, in that admirable injunction which he addressed to the Philippian believers, and enforced by the example of our blessed Redeemer himself:—"Let nothing be done through strife or vain glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.—Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Perhaps there are no defects or failings, to which, more frequently than to those of temper, the mournful complaints are applicable, which an apostle thus poured forth: "That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not: For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil

that I would not, that I do." How powerful, then, is the inducement to pray without ceasing, that He who has all power over the spirit of man, would exert over our feelings a salutary control, and in the moment of exposure to unholy irritation and excitement, would preserve us in perfect peace. This entire control it would be too much to expect from the unaided efforts of our own minds; but it is not too much to expect from the promised succour of the Holy Spirit, since it is expressly said, that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, and meekness." What are these attractive excellencies of character, but the very elements of the christian temper? If these, then, are the communications of the Holy Spirit, surely the most direct and the most effectual method of attaining the government of the temper, is to seek, by earnest prayer, the indwelling of the Spirit of God. Distinguished in a high degree has been the success of some Christians, who have combined persevering prayer with persevering effort, to acquire an habitual command of temper. A very remarkable and edifying instance of this success is presented to our view, in the character of the eminently holy and useful Mr. Fletcher of Madely. "He was meek," says his biographer, "like his Master, as well as lowly in heart. Not that he was so by nature, but a man of strong

passions, and prone to anger in particular; inasmuch that he has frequently spent the greater part of the night, bathed in tears, imploring victory over his own spirit. And he did not strive in vain. He did obtain the victory, in a very eminent degree. Yea, so thoroughly had grace subdued nature; so fully was he renewed in the spirit of his mind, that for many years before his death, I believe he was never observed by any one, friend or foe, to be out of temper, on any provocation whatever. The testimony that Bishop Burnet bears of Archbishop Leighton might be borne of him with equal propriety:—After an intimate acquaintance with the Archbishop, for many years, and after being with him by night and by day, at home and abroad, in public and in private; I must say, I never heard an idle word drop from his lips: . —I never saw him in any temper in which I myself would not have wished to be found at death!”

*Secondly,* Let us guard against the very first tendencies to the workings of an evil Temper.

There are two descriptions of evil temper which are equally to be deprecated and repressed. The one is the sullen temper, and the other the irascible. The former, if less violent, is more lasting; assuming too often the character of a gloomy, morose and discontented habit of mind, effectually disqualifying the individual for all enjoyment, unfitting him for all society, and

rendering him perfectly intractable. The latter, if less permanent, has an aspect still more alarming. How it distorts the expression of the countenance; how it disturbs the exercise of reason; how it degrades the character of a christian; how it quenches and grieves the Spirit of love; how it amasses materials for self-reproach; how it exposes to consequences the most tremendous! In its fearful progress it resembles the movement of a ponderous mass, from the summit of a hill: at first, the motion is gradual and subject to some control; but the velocity is every instant accelerated, till the force it acquires in its descent bears down every interposing barrier, and bids defiance to all resistance. Seize then the golden opportunity while reason retains its power. Let an instantaneous ejaculation of the heart ascend to Him who heareth prayer, for the succour which He can promptly impart. Let there be, at least, the delay of a moment, before indulgence be conceded to the spirit of rising anger; and if even this brief interval be gained, there is some reason to hope, that the threatened and approaching paroxysm may be averted. A spark is more easily extinguished than a flame. "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger." "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."



*Thirdly*, Let the *expressions* of an evil Temper be resolutely controlled.

“ A soft answer turneth away wrath ; but grievous words stir up anger.” While cutting words exasperate the individual against whom they are directed, they have the effect of stimulating, to more tumultuous emotions, the passion from which they spring. How often do we feel conscious, that our words are not only the utterance, but the instruments, and the excitements, of thought ; and if thus they operate when we use them mentally, how much more powerful must be their operation when we use them audibly ! Our very tones of voice seem to have a power over our tones of feeling ; and, by an instantaneous reaction, arising out of the mysterious sympathy and harmony of the inner and the outer man, they assume the character at once both of causes and effects. We are aware also, that when our feelings have not only been strongly excited, but also strongly expressed, we stand committed ; we have taken a decided step, and we know not how to retract. The desire of consistency, at least in appearance, urges us to proceed ; and into that desire there enters much of the spirit of pride. What abundant reason, then, have we to present the Psalmist’s prayer :—“ Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips.”

*Fourthly*, Let the dispositions and tempers of others be duly studied and regarded.

Often does a regard to self-interest induce men to study the character of others. They deem it important to ascertain, what may be calculated to please, and what may have a tendency to disturb and to annoy. Of these discoveries they find it beneficial to avail themselves, in order to extend the sphere of that influence, which they know how to employ, for the accomplishment of their sinister ends. Now shall we not study the character of those with whom we have intercourse, for nobler purposes, and from purer motives? It would be worthy of an enlightened disciple and follower of Jesus, thus to reason and reflect:—"I am aware that I have my own peculiarities of temper and of disposition; yet I am accustomed to expect from others some degree of indulgent kindness: is it not then incumbent on me to be kindly considerate and equally indulgent towards them? Shall I make an attack on that which I have reason to regard as the weakest and most vulnerable point, in the mental character of another? Shall I act towards one who has claims on my kindness, or towards any human being upon earth, the part of a tempter, by stirring up the dormant evil of the heart? Shall I elicit a spark, which I have reason to fear may soon enkindle a flame, or even produce an explosion?

Oh, this would be to indulge the adversary of God and of man with a double triumph ;—first, a triumph over myself, degraded into the character of a tempter ; and then over a fellow-creature, whom, as though Satan's emissary, I have actually tempted and ensnared !”

*Fifthly*, Whenever there is the consciousness of having culpably given offence, let there be prompt and humble acknowledgments.

How proud and unsanctified is the spirit that cannot stoop to offer an apology, even when there is the secret consciousness that a humble acknowledgment is due ; and how fearful are often the consequences of a refusal ! What must be the standard of morals, and the criterion of right and wrong in that mind, in which the idea of *honour* is but little associated with the idea of *justice* ? What must be the state of the moral sense in the mind of that man, who persuades himself, that the law of honour demands resentment, when the law of justice requires concession ?

Most unwelcome, indeed, to human nature, is the confession of a fault ; but the very pain is salutary ; both as it summons to the exercise of humility, and as it is calculated to deter from a repetition of the offence. It is unquestionably a christian duty, for it is inculcated by apostolic authority in terms the most explicit. “ Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for

another"—is the injunction of the Apostle James. And if this be a duty which we owe to man, it is also a duty which we owe to the blessed God. Be it remembered, that every sin against a fellow-creature, is at the same time a sin against God, whose law requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Of all sin, without exception, is it said,—"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy." The sins committed against our fellow-creatures should be humbly confessed both before them and before God; for if either acknowledgment be withheld, there will be wanting the evidence that the other confession is sincere. "If we confess our sins"—as God requires us, with a humble and contrite heart—"he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

*Sixthly*, Let there be no approach to an implacable and unforgiving spirit.

Perhaps we have sometimes heard from the lips of one who considered himself aggrieved and injured, such utterances of the heart as this;—"I may forgive, but I can never forget the offence." And the attendant indications of feeling may have rendered it too evident, that the proffered forgiveness, while the language of the lips, was by no means the language of the heart. Is this the forgiveness which God requires us to exercise?

With such feelings as these in the heart, will a man venture before the throne of God, and offer that petition:—"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us?" Would it satisfy our desires and tranquillize our consciences, that *such* forgiveness should be extended to us, by Him at whose bar we must appear? Can we entertain a hope, or even dare to offer a supplication, that to us there should be remitted by God a debt of ten thousand talents, if we have not the heart to remit a debt due to us from a fellow-creature of even a hundred pence? "How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him," (asked Peter); "till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but until seventy times seven." It was on this occasion that our Saviour gave to his disciples the affecting parable (to which allusion has now been made) of the debtor who hardened his heart against a fellow-servant, on whom he had an inconsiderable claim, although claims, to an immense extent, had been in his own case freely remitted by his Lord. "O, thou wicked servant," well might his Lord exclaim, "shouldst not thou have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due to him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, *from*

*your hearts*, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Oh that we participated largely in the feelings of her whom Jesus himself commended when he said, "Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much."—"Love *I* much?—I have much forgiven"—may every christian say, while he examines the frame and temper of his spirit, and reflects on the vastness of his obligations. Surely if there dwelt in our hearts more of grateful love to Him by whose redeeming blood we obtain the forgiveness of our sins, it would become an easy and even a delightful task to extend forgiveness to others. In connexion with these remarks, I would add,—

*Finally*, Let us reflect much, with a view to constant imitation, on the perfect and glorious example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Dost thou well to be angry?"—is a question which you are sometimes, perhaps, disposed, like the petulant prophet, to answer in the affirmative, alleging the greatness of the provocation. At such a moment, call to mind the provocations offered to our divine Redeemer. Think of the base ingratitude and the perpetual insults he endured. Think of the contradiction of sinners, and the revilings of blasphemers, he had to encounter, throughout the entire course of his suffering life, and especially when it was hastening

to a close. Think of the irritating language with which he was assailed in the palace of Caiaphas, and in the hall of Pilate, and in the presence of Herod; and then yield your minds to the force of the touching representations of the Apostle Peter:—"If when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." Let, then, that mind and that temper be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory and honour and ever-during praise!

## LECTURE X.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

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#### JAMES III. 2.

*If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.*

“THE tongue,” affirms this Apostle, “can no man tame.” Animals the most fierce and the most formidable have been subjected to the rule of man, and by his sagacity rendered tractable and docile. But it transcends all human power to impose an effectual curb on the tongue of unregenerate man, or entirely to counteract the venom emitted from his lips. Hopeless, however, as might be the effort to control the tongue of another, not so is the attempt to control our own. It is confessedly difficult, but it is indispensably requisite; for the same Apostle has said—“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridlETH not his tongue, but deceivETH his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.” The Govern-



ment of the Tongue, then, it is absolutely necessary to attain; and he who acquires it in the highest degree, is the christian of most distinguished eminence:—"If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." The human body is here represented, by the Apostle, as a complex system of members and organs, designed to be subject to the authority, and subservient to the purposes, of the indwelling mind. Of these organs there is one; over which it is peculiarly difficult to obtain a due ascendancy. If then that control be acquired, much easier will be the task of duly restraining the rest; so that the man who has acquired the government of his tongue, may be supposed to have attained a correspondent dominion over all the organs, over all the senses, and over all the appetites, of the corporeal frame. If any man, therefore, could be found, who, since the acquisition of that power, had never in any instance abused, or failed to improve, the faculty of speech, he might be regarded as a perfect man: and, in so far as there is an approach to this exalted attainment, there is acquired, by the controlling mind, a facility in bridling and governing the complex system of "the outer man."

Let me, then, engage your fixed attention,

FIRST, To the peculiar importance of the Government of the Tongue; and

SECONDLY, To the principles by which this Government is to be acquired and maintained.

FIRST, Let us reflect on the importance of attaining this control.

Consider, *first*, The dignity and excellence of the faculty of speech.

He who delights to gather materials for admiration and praise, out of the curious and wondrous economy of man's living frame, will find much to repay his researches in the contemplation of the faculty of speech. Think of the delicate and difficult articulations which intelligible speech requires. Think of the combination of a few simple and elementary sounds, denoted by a small number of alphabetical characters, so as to form all the thousands of words which we employ in the conveyance of thought. Think of the power acquired in early life of connecting with these sounds the ideas which they are employed to express; so that even before the formalities of education have commenced, there has been an admirable progress made in the knowledge of the arbitrary symbols of thought, by means of which we converse. Think of the power of memory which the use of language involves. Think of the influence of words in aiding and guiding all our processes of thought, even when no sentence escapes our lips. Who gave us this power of articulate speech, which raises us so far above the

most sagacious of all the inferior tribes of animated nature? Who sustains all the delicate sensibilities of the ear and of the tongue, required for distinct articulation? Answer such questions as these, and surely you will not be disposed to unite with those who say,—“ Our tongues are our own, who is Lord over us?” Surely, if you feel aright, you will enter into the grateful emotions of him who exclaimed, “ Awake up my glory;—my heart is prepared; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.”

Consider, *secondly*, the influence which the Tongue is capable of exerting over the minds and characters of others.

Can you specify the country, or the age, or the condition of society, in which this influence has not been powerful? Conceive of the effects produced, even on a tribe of savages, by the simple and vehement oratory of a warlike chief. Conceive, if you are able, of the effects produced on a democratic assembly of ancient Greeks by the energies of Demosthenian eloquence. You have sometimes felt, perhaps, the willing subjugation of the soul to the fascinating and commanding talents of some master of the power of speech, who knew well the avenues which give access to the human heart. And long before it was possible for you to know what the word eloquence denotes, you felt the power of the living, and

animating, and soothing voice. You listened to the music of a mother's most endearing accents, and to the joy-inspiring tones of a father's voice of love. And as your capabilities of thought began to unfold themselves under parental fosterage, you imbibed full many a sentiment, and received full many an impression, even while you were only in the act of acquiring the use of your mother tongue. And what is the history of all your companionship, but the history of the reciprocal influences of thought and feeling, communicated through the medium of speech? The influence which in your early days you felt, without tracing it to its source, you have long since begun to exert, and you are daily in the habit of exerting, over the minds of those around you. Is that influence,--let me most earnestly and affectionately inquire--is that influence of a character beneficial, or is it of a character injurious to the dearest interests of your associates? Would they have been losers, or would they have been gainers, had they never listened to your voice?

Consider, *thirdly*, the awful responsibility connected with the employment of the Tongue.

Hear the declaration of Him who will hereafter occupy that throne, before which shall be gathered all nations:—"I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment; for

by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." It is, I conceive, as if our Lord had said :—" The evidences of thy character shall be sufficiently gathered from the words of thy lips ; so that, independently of thine actions, there will be abundant materials for the decisions of the judgment day." Even a philosophic heathen could say,—“ Such as a man is, such are his words :” and He who knew, infinitely better, what is in man, said,—“ Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” If the tongue, in one single conversation, or even in one significant expression, may be regarded as the index to the heart, what a mass of materials for the proceedings of the judgment seat must be accumulating every day of life, as the words, whether thoughtfully or heedlessly, are falling from our lips ! What an awakening consideration should it at all times prove,—that every word we speak is heard by Him whose ear (no less than his eye) is in every place ; and that every utterance of the lips is recorded in “ the book of His remembrance !” Oh, for the blotting out, then, of “ the hand-writing that is against us” in that book ! Oh, for an interest in the abundant mercy of Him who has said,—“ I, even I am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins.” Who that attempts to retrace the history of the communications of his

own lips, will not acknowledge the necessity of an interest in the sacrifice of expiation which was offered on Calvary? What can authorise the feeling of repose and tranquillity, in the prospect of the day of account, but a believing reliance on the mercy of God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who "was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

No doubt, then, it may be presumed, can remain on your minds, with regard to the peculiar and inexpressible importance of the Government of the Tongue. You are prepared, I trust, to direct your willing attention,

SECONDLY, To the principles on which we should aim at acquiring that control.

*First*, Let our chief anxiety be directed to the fountain of thought and of language.

Hopeless will be the effort to purify the streams unless the source be pure. Unreasonable will be the expectation of valuable fruit, unless the tree be good. In the discourse of our Saviour to which I have already adverted, this subject is placed in the clearest and the strongest light. "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt; for the tree is known by his fruit.—How can ye being evil, speak good things?—A good man, out of the good treasure of the heart,

bringeth forth good things; and an evil man, out of the evil treasure, bringeth forth evil things." Who, then, is the good man, whose heart contains a good treasure of the materials requisite for edifying discourse? It is the man who is prepared to speak of God, and of Christ, and of heaven, because he delights to think of God, and of Christ, and of heaven. It is the man who is "spiritually minded," being "born of the Spirit," and "led by the Spirit," as one of "the children of God."—Wonder not, then, that it should have been said by the Saviour—"Ye must be born again."

To those who have the hope and the evidence of this renewal of the mind, I would say:—Let the keeping of the heart be the care of every day. Let it be right with God, and let it be right with man. Let the love of God dwell there, and it will be your delight, with your lips, "to bless his name,—abundantly to utter the memory of his great goodness, to speak of the glory of his kingdom, to make known his mighty acts, to testify of his righteousness, and to shew forth his salvation." Let that love of man also which thinketh no evil dwell there, and evil-speaking will, in no instance, defile your lips. From those lips shall ever flow the words of kindness, because the law of love is written on the heart.

*Secondly*, Let us avoid and detest all those abuses of the Tongue, by which the power of speech would be perverted, and its utility counteracted.

These abuses include—

1. All that is inconsistent with Truth.

He who asserts a falsehood, or promotes deception, or violates the confidence reposed in him for veracity, does what in him lies, to destroy all the securities of society, to undermine the very basis of its constitution, and to reduce it to a state of pitiable and wretched barbarism. If even among men of the world, every species of untruth is considered despicable and degrading, Oh how high should be the standard of veracity and sincerity among the disciples of that Divine Master, “in whose lips was found no guile!” My christian brethren, “speak ye every one truth to his neighbour;—truth without subterfuge and without equivocation:—truth which will bear the scrutiny of conscience; yes, and of that Searcher of the heart, “whose eyes are as a flame of fire.”

These abuses include—

2. All that is inconsistent with the feelings of christian kindness and charity.

On this head I offer, without apology, the forcible and pungent remarks of Dr. Chalmers:—  
“It is a fault to *speak* evil one of another, but the



essence of the fault lies in the want of that charity which *thinketh* no evil. Had the heart been filled with this principle, no such bad thing as slander would have come out of it.—The forms of evil speaking, however, break out into manifold varieties. There is the resentful outcry. There is the manly and indignant disapproval. There is the invective of vulgar malignity. There is the poignancy of satirical remark. There is the giddiness of mere volatility, which spreads its entertaining levities over a gay and light-hearted party. These are all so many transgressions of one and the same duty: and you can easily conceive an enlightened christian sitting in judgment over them all, and taking hold of the right principle upon which he would condemn them all; and which, if brought to bear with efficacy on the consciences of the different offenders, would not merely silence the passionate evil-speaker out of his outrageous exclamations, and restrain the malignant evil-speaker from his deliberate thrusts at the reputation of the absent; but would rebuke the humorous evil-speaker out of his fanciful and amusing sketches, and the gossiping evil-speaker out of his tiresome and never-ending narratives.”

To this vivid and pointed specification, by the christian preacher, allow me to add a sentence or two from the pen of a French moralist; appealing,

it is confessed, to principles of an inferior order, yet such as are well calculated to produce effect :—  
 “ He of whom you delight to speak evil, may become acquainted with what you have said ; and he will be your enemy : or, if he remain in ignorance of it, you will still have to reproach yourself with the meanness of attacking one who had no opportunity of defending himself. If scandal is to be secret, it is the crime of a *coward* ; if it is to become known, it is the crime of a *madman*.”

The abuses to be avoided include—

3. All that is inconsistent with the utmost delicacy and purity.

Hear the inspired writer of the Epistle to the Ephesians :—“ Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient :” or rather, which are *not to be tolerated* ; being highly offensive to God, and highly injurious to man. From the import of the terms employed in the original, the Apostle is supposed to advert here, to artfully turned expressions, in which more is meant than meets the ear, and more than the modest ear could tolerate ;—in which, by words of double meaning, there is displayed the execrable wit, that renders terms, in themselves not indelicate, the vehicle, when artfully combined, of conveying ideas indelicate in the highest degree. From uttering and from hearing this language of

deep depravity, may the God of all grace preserve the young!

Let these hints suffice, in reference to the many abuses of the Tongue, which it is of the greatest importance to avoid.

*Thirdly*, Let there be more than ordinary vigilance, where there is more than ordinary danger.

Consideration should, in every instance, precede expression. If we would adopt the only rational method in which words can be uttered, we must determine—first to think, and then to speak. “Either be silent,” said Pythagoras to his disciples, “or say something that is better than silence.” And a greater than Pythagoras has said;—“In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin, but he that refraineth his lips is wise.”—“Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words, there is more hope of a fool than of him.” But if the habit of consideration be at all times desirable, how much more requisite must it be in circumstances of peculiar danger. That danger may arise sometimes from *within*, and originate in our own hearts. Often it may be imminent, under the impulse of strong and ardent feeling, and especially under the excitement of angry and tumultuous emotions. How important, then, is the exhortation of the Apostle James:—“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to

wrath; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." If wrath be rising, if the storm be gathering in thy soul, summon to thine aid the most effectual principles of self-control. Suspect thyself; dread thyself; and look up to Him who is able, in the moment of peril, "to succour them that are tempted."

The danger to be apprehended arises sometimes from *without* still more than from within. Of this source of peril the Psalmist was feelingly aware. "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle; while the wicked is before me. I was dumb with silence; I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred." If, as in the case of David, injuries have been received, there may be danger of uttering, in return, impatient, and impetuous, and resentful, and recriminating, and heart-cutting words. If favours have been received, there may be danger of yielding a sinful assent to the opinions expressed, and the principles maintained. In the hours of social intercourse, how gradual and easy is often the transition from the expression of sentiments with which you may safely accord, to the utterance of sentiments with which it would be culpable to accord; and, under these circumstances, how perplexing and entangling does the course of conversation often become. What a painful and

difficult struggle then commences in the mind, between the fear of offending man, and the fear of offending God. And although a holy decision of character will promptly determine in what manner the struggle shall terminate, who is there that cannot perceive the extreme danger of such a situation to the timid, the modest, and the young? Nor let it be forgotten, that silence itself may be sin; and sin it undoubtedly is, if it proceed from that "fear of man which bringeth a snare;"—a fear of boldly avowing the principles of the gospel, and maintaining the honour of the cause of Christ. "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words," said the Lord Jesus, "of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels."

*Fourthly*, Let us remember, that it is incumbent upon us to conduct our social intercourse, so as not only to avoid doing evil, but also to effect all possible good.

Not satisfied with saying merely,—“Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth;”—the Apostle added,—“but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.” The christians of Colosse are also thus exhorted:—“Let your speech be alway with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” It is as if the Apostle had said:—“Let there be in

your conversation a principle of holy vitality, which may prove that your hearts are alive to God: let there be in it a corrective principle, preventing the tendencies to that which is corrupt,—too often apparent in social intercourse: let there be in it the virtue of a powerful stimulant, exciting the minds of others to all that is pure and salutary, while it imparts to conversation a zest most gratifying to the spiritual taste." And ought we to feel at a loss for materials to conduct, on these principles, the interchange of thought and sentiment, in the hours of friendly intercourse? What was the subject on which the two celestial visitants conversed with our Lord, on the Mount which was the scene of his transfiguration? What was the class of subjects on which Jesus usually conversed with his disciples? What were the subjects most interesting to the minds of those primitive christians, who "continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers,—eating their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people?" No dejection sat on their countenance; no melancholy brooded over their minds; no moroseness could be detected in their demeanour; no insipidity rendered unattractive their conversation; yet we cannot doubt that their chief and favourite topics of discourse were connected with

“ the decease accomplished at Jerusalem,” and its wondrous and glorious results. What other subjects could be in their estimation equally interesting, when, with one mind and one heart, they counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord ; and were chiefly solicitous to live to his glory on earth, and to dwell eternally in his presence in heaven. Oh that we could imbibe more of their spirit, and then would it be easier to imitate, in some degree, the style and character of their heavenly conversation ! Were this attained, what incalculable benefits might we not diffuse throughout the sphere of our social intercourse !

*Fifthly*, Let us connect with our best-directed efforts our most earnest prayers for divine aid.

A most appropriate prayer is to be found in an effusion of the inspired Psalmist :—“ Lord, I cry unto thee ; make haste unto me ; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense ; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door of my lips.” Our daily prayers, including petitions such as these, should have, as much as possible, the regularity and the constancy of the morning and the evening sacrifice anciently offered at Jerusalem ; and if offered by faith in Him of whose atoning blood those sacrifices were the appointed

symbols, they will rise to heaven as acceptably as the cloud of odoriferous and emblematic incense. If we thus lift up our ardent desires to God, for communications which He only can bestow, we shall not fail to receive the aid of heavenly grace, in restraining our lips from evil, and in exciting that spirituality of mind, which is the best preparation for the hours of social intercourse. If we habitually converse much with God, we shall have the best preparation for conversing well and profitably with men. It will then also become easy and natural to us, to offer such petitions as the Psalmist's, not merely in the hours of periodical devotion, but at every moment of solicitude and of danger, when aid from above may be especially required.

*Lastly*, Let us examine ourselves frequently, at the bar of conscience, in reference to the government of the Tongue.

Have we not, on this subject, occasion for very deep regret, and penitential abasement of spirit? How little have we honoured God, by the improvement of this noble faculty, his gracious gift! How little have we effected by the power of speech, for the spiritual benefit of those around us! Were we to be deprived of this faculty, in any degree, by the effect of paralyzing disease, how heavy a burden might our consciences feel, from the recollections of our misimprovement of this inva-



luable gift! Are there not some who, instead of doing good, have occasioned incalculable evil by the abuse of the Tongue? "The tongue" of some "is a fire, a world of iniquity; so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." So let it not be with any one of us! May pardon be obtained for past offences and past deficiencies, through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus: and may there be granted, in answer to prayer, the effectual aid of the Holy Spirit, to control and sanctify the faculty of speech; that "not offending in word," we may attain the perfection referred to in our text, being able to govern, by most effectual discipline, the whole economy of "the outer man," to the glory of our God, and the spiritual and eternal benefit of all within the sphere of our influence.

## LECTURE XI.

### THE GOVERNMENT OF THE CONDUCT.

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1 COR. x. 31.

*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.*

WE are in some danger of undervaluing such parts of scripture, as refer to circumstances in the primitive Church, to which no exact parallel can be found among ourselves. Yet, frequently may we trace to these very circumstances, the enforcement of principles, both of faith and of conduct, characterized by vital importance, and designed for universal application. A striking and instructive instance of this occurs, in connexion with the words which have now been read. The question had probably been proposed to the Apostle :—"Is it, under any circumstances, lawful for christians, in their occasional intercourse with the heathen around them, to partake of food which had been previously carried into an idol's temple, and regarded in the light of an offering?" The Apostle replies with admirable discrimination and wisdom :—"Whatsoever is sold in the shambles,

that eat, asking no questions, for conscience sake : for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof ;" so that whatever he has provided for the food of man, may be gratefully received as his gift. " If any of them that believe not, bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go ; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you,—This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake ; for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." The enlightened christian might be so convinced of the absolute non-entity of an idol, as to believe, that neither good nor harm could attach to the food, from its contact with an idol's altar. But his conduct was not to be guided exclusively by his own conceptions. It was incumbent on him to take into view the ideas and the feelings of others. He owed a duty to all who might be present on that occasion. If any were idolaters, they might be in danger of supposing that he gave some countenance to their usages, by partaking of that food. If any were believers, either their minds might be grieved by that which they deemed inconsistent and culpable in their christian brother ; or they might be induced, by the force of his example, to do that, respecting which they were not without some scruples of conscience. Now to disregard the

voice of conscience, even in its faintest whispers, is sinful; and therefore to do that which is calculated to excite or encourage another, to disregard even the scruples of a tender conscience, is displeasing in the sight of God. The Apostle, therefore, having said, "Eat not, for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake," adds, in explanation;—"Conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other." He then anticipates an objection on the part of the individual thus interdicted,—who might be disposed to say: "But why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?" Why is the scrupulous conscience of another man to be the guide or the judge of my conduct? "For if I, by the bounteous grant of God, be allowed to partake of food without restriction, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?" In answer to this objection, the Apostle lays down a principle sublimely simple, which recommends itself to every enlightened mind; and is applicable, not only to cases bearing resemblance to that which had been specified, but to all the varying circumstances in which we can, by any possibility, be placed in the course of human life:—"Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, *do all to the glory of God.*" You have before you, then, in these few words of inspiration, *the grand directory for the Government of the*

*Conduct.* May the blessing of the Hdly Spirit rest upon the attempt now to be made, to commend and to enforce this grand principle, in connexion with some general rules which the principle itself either involves or requires.

Beginning, then, with the principle itself, let me say:—

FIRST, Aim, in every action, and in every enjoyment, to please and to glorify God.

Character is ascertained by motive: and the governing motive in the conduct of life cannot be right, unless it correspond with the design for which life itself is given. What the design of Him who made us is, we may learn from the recorded expressions of the inhabitants of the world above, in the act of rendering homage to the Almighty:—"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things; and *for thy pleasure* they are, and were created." With the design of creation, that of redeeming mercy is in perfect unison. "Ye are not your own," said an Apostle to believers in Jesus, "for ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God with *your bodies* and *your spirits*, which are his.—Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory for ever.—I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present *your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable

unto God, which is your reasonable service." Our lowly, yet aspiring ambition, then, as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, should be, to enjoy the honour of perpetual employment in his service, and to receive the intimations of his gracious acceptance and approval. We should desire to be "in the house of God, which is the church of the living God,—vessels unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work. Whatsoever we do in word or deed, we should do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving glory to God by him." That such was not only the precept but the practice of the Apostles and first christians, is evident, not only from their declarations, but from the general tenour of their lives. And does this require a sanctity peculiar to the primitive christians, and not to be attained by us? Let me exhibit to your view the prevailing sentiments and actuating motives of some devoted servants of God in periods recently past. I will first adduce the example of that theologian of distinguished intellect, the excellent President Edwards, of America. Among the resolutions which he formed, in dependence on divine grace, for the government of his conduct, and which he determined every week to review, were the following :

"Resolved; never to do, or to be, any thing, in soul or in body, but what tends to the glory of God."

“Resolved ; never to act as if I were in any way my own, but entirely and altogether God’s.”

“Resolved ; to live with all my might while I do live.”

The sentiment of this resolution is thus beautifully amplified by Dr. Doddridge :

“Live, while you live, the Epicure would say,  
And seize the pleasures of the present day.  
Live, while you live, the sacred preacher cries,  
And give to God each moment as it flies.  
Lord, in my views, let both united be,  
I live in pleasure, when I live to thee.”

“I have been before God,” (said President Edwards, in one of his private papers,) “and I have given all that I am and have to God, so that I am not in any respect my own. I can claim no right in myself ; no right in this understanding, this will, these affections that are in me ; no right to this tongue, these hands, these feet, these senses. I have given every power to him. I have expressly engaged to take the Almighty God for my whole portion and felicity, looking on nothing else as any part of my happiness. Now henceforth I am not to act in any respect as my own. I shall act as my own, if I ever make use of any of my powers to any thing that is not to the glory of God ; or do not make the glorifying of God my whole and entire business ; if I murmur in the least at afflictions ; if I am any way uncharitable ;

if I am angry because of injuries ; if I do any thing purely to please myself ; or avoid any thing for the sake of my ease ; or omit any thing because it is great self-denial ; if I trust to myself ; if I take any of the praise of any good that I do, or rather God does by me ; or if I am any way proud."

To the sentiments and resolutions of this holy man, let me add those of one of a former age, who lived in a period of great persecution. I refer to the eminent non-conformist minister, Joseph Alleine. In a letter to a friend he thus wrote :—

" I desire to know no other business than to please and honour my God, and serve my generation, in that short allowance of time that I have here, before I go hence and be seen no more. Shall I commend to you the lesson that I am about to learn ? It is to be entirely devoted to the Lord, that I may be able to say after the Apostle,—‘ To me to live is Christ,’—that in all my actions, whether sacred or civil, I may be doing but one work, and pursuing but one design. My desire is, that God may be pleased by me, and glorified in me, not only by my praying, and preaching, and almsgiving, but even by my eating, and drinking, and sleeping, and visits, and discourses ; that I may ‘ do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving glory to God by him.’ Too often do I take a wrong aim, and miss my mark ;



but I will tell you what are the rules I set myself, and strictly impose upon myself from day to day :—never to lie down, but in the name of God ; not barely for natural refreshment, but that a wearied servant of Christ may be recruited, and fitted to serve him better the next day :—never to rise up but with this resolution ;—well, I will go forth this day in the name of God, and will make religion my business, and spend the day for eternity :—never to enter upon my calling, but first thinking, I will do these things as unto God, because he requireth these things at my hands, in the place and station to which he hath appointed me :—never to sit down to the table, but resolving, I will not eat merely to please my appetite, but to strengthen myself for my Master's work :—never to make a visit but upon some holy design, resolving to leave something of God wherever I go. This is that which I have been for some time learning, and am pressing hard after ; and if I strive not to walk by these rules, let this paper be a witness against me."

Long as these extracts have been, I must add a few sentences from the life of the holy and devoted Brainerd. When he had nearly finished his course of self-denying labours, he said :—" My heaven is to please God, and glorify him ; to give all to him, and to be wholly devoted to his glory. This is the heaven I long for ; that is my religion,

and that is my happiness, and always was, ever since I suppose I had any true religion.—It is impossible for any rational creature to be happy without doing all for God: God himself could not make him happy any other way. I long to be in heaven, praising and glorifying God with the holy angels; all my desire is to glorify God.—There is nothing in the world worth living for, but doing good, and finishing God's work. I see nothing else in the world, that can yield any satisfaction, besides living to God, pleasing him, and doing his whole will." Can you refrain from saying, Let me live the life, "let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"

*Secondly,* Let the word of God be habitually studied as the rule of life.

If the doctrines of the bible had been exhibited in a detached form, so as to constitute a separate part of the word of God; and if the precepts had also been presented to our view as a distinct section of the sacred book, some persons would have evinced a predilection for the former, to the neglect of the latter; and some would have displayed a preference of the latter to the disparagement of the former. Such, however, is the wisdom apparent in the intimacy of connexion between the one and the other, throughout the entire extent of the holy scriptures, that we cannot study the rule of faith, without having our atten-

tion summoned to the rule of conduct ; neither can we examine the rule of life, without having our views directed to the rule of faith. The doctrines and the precepts are so interwoven in the very texture of divine revelation, that nothing short of destructive violence can effect a disruption. He, therefore, who has “ believed on God will be careful to maintain good works ;” and he who cherishes this solicitude will daily search those oracles of truth, which are “ profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, in order that he may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” The language of his inmost soul will be,—“ Lord, what wilt thou have me to do ?” “ If,” said a holy man, “ in reference to any action or indulgence, the word of God says, *Thou shalt not*, a child of God says at once, *I will not*, in spite of strength of inclination, or violence of temptation. If God says, *Thou shalt*, he says, in spite of custom, difficulty, or danger, *I will*. This is freedom ; this is happiness ; this is life and power from God.” Can you, my friends, adopt this language as your own ? Is it your prevailing desire to be able to say all this, with sincerity and truth ? Do you habitually resort to the word of God for practical purposes ? Do you resort to it, as to the wisest of counsellors, to take advice on which you are prepared to act ? Do you resort to it,

as to the decisions of a judge, from whom there is no appeal? Do you gratefully avail yourselves of its adaptation to be "a lamp to your feet and a light to your path?" Can you truly say,—“I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way?” What are they all, but amplifications, in beauteous detail, adapted to all the diversified circumstances of life, of the one grand directory,—“Whether ye eat or drink or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.”

*Thirdly,* Yield yourselves unreservedly to the directing and controlling influence of the Spirit of God.

Unless the indispensable necessity of this divine influence be kept in view, as the object of desire and prayer, all the other rules of holy living will be enforced in vain. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God; but ye,” said the Apostle, “are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.”—“The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” By “the law of sin

and death," is here, I conceive, meant, the commanding influence of evil; and, therefore, by the law of the Spirit of life, is intended, the commanding influence of that Spirit who gives the life divine. The authority, then, of the Spirit of God, in the heart in which he dwells, is the paramount authority of law acknowledged, revered, and loved. He there erects his throne, asserts his dominion, and maintains his ascendancy. He exerts a sanctifying influence over the thoughts, the desires, the dispositions and the affections of the soul. He works in the believer "both to will and to do, according to his own good pleasure;" and thus is fulfilled that righteousness which the law of God requires, but which unaided man would never be qualified to attain. If, then, it be our desire, that our conduct should be governed by the law of God, so that "whatever we do, we may do all to his glory," we must yield ourselves unreservedly to the guidance and government of the Spirit of God. Let every christian be prepared to say from the heart:—"Lead me and guide me, O Spirit of light and life, into all the truth I am required to believe, and into all the paths of righteousness in which I am required to walk. Most gratefully and dutifully would I yield myself to thy commanding influence. Reign in my heart as on thy throne. Dwell in my soul as in thy temple. Sanctify,

elevate, sustain my energies of thought and feeling. "Work in me all the good pleasure of thy goodness, and the work of faith with power."

*Fourthly*, Let there be a diligent improvement of every talent committed to your trust.

I need not now enter on any minute specification of the various orders of talents, respecting every one of which, the Lord and Master has said,—“Occupy till I come.”

*Time* is a talent of inestimable value, not to be wasted by indolent repose, not to be lavished on unprofitable pursuits, not to be consumed on mere amusement, not to be lost by delusive procrastination. “Let me never delay any thing,” said Dr. Doddridge, “unless I can prove that another time will be more fit than the present, or that some more important duty requires my immediate attention. Let me never lose one minute of time.”

“Time wasted is *existence* ; used is *life* !

——— Pay

No moment, but in purchase of its worth.”

*Property* is a talent, capable of effecting extensive good, and involving a serious and fearful responsibility. Never was there a period, since the days of the Apostles, in which the demands for the employment of this talent were more numerous, or more imperative, than at the present day ; and never was there a period more distinguished

by facilities for rendering its employment productive of advantage. An account of our stewardship is soon to be required. Will it then appear, that we have been "providing bags which wax not old ; a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth ?"

*Opportunities of doing good*, of whatever kind, are talents ; and they are an order of talents entrusted, in a greater or less degree, to every one of us, according to the sphere in which we severally move. It is an assertion equally correct and important,—that "opportunity to do good constitutes an obligation to enter on the performance." This sentiment was so intimately incorporated with the moral feelings of the excellent Dr. Cotton Mather, that he was accustomed, previously to his entering on the engagements of every day, to inquire what opportunities of doing good he had reason to anticipate. His habitual inquiries were such as these : "What have I to do, for the interests of God, in my own heart and life ? What shall I do for the good of my family ? What shall I do, for the good of the flock under my charge ? What good may I do, in the several societies to which I belong ? What shall I do, for the general interests of religion in the world ?" Let the spirit of these inquiries be imbibed by us, and let the principles on which they proceed be the principles

of our conduct; and beyond all doubt, we shall find, that the most useful life is at the same time the most happy.

*Fifthly*, Let there be an habitual solicitude to guard against every thing which would bring reproach upon your christian profession.

I am presuming that there is christian *profession*, as well as christian *principle*. Unless there be, how can there be given satisfactory evidence of a sincere and prevailing desire to live to the glory of God? Not more explicitly are we required, —“with the heart to believe unto righteousness,” than “with the mouth to make confession unto salvation.” *That very confession*, if unequivocal, uniform and consistent, is one of the most direct methods of giving glory to our God and Saviour. “Whosoever,” said the Saviour, “shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father who is in heaven; —But whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words; of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.” And will he be less ashamed of the man who, in words, confessed him, but in works denied him? Can that profession be available or acceptable, which is falsified by actions, or neutralized by the spirit and the love of this present world? Oh, of what incalculable importance is it, that “every one who nameth the name of Christ



should depart from iniquity ;" and that every one who contends for the faith once delivered to the saints, should "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Can you calculate the evils which have arisen, from the conduct of those professors of religion, who have proved themselves to be, in reality, the bitterest enemies of the cross of Christ? Can you estimate the influence or the extent of the prejudices they have created, the scepticism they have encouraged, the persecution they have awakened, and the aid they have rendered to the cause of the tempter and the destroyer? Be it, then, your solicitude, my christian brethren, that your light may so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father who is in heaven." Be it your concern to "do justly, and to love mercy," as well as "to walk humbly with your God." Let these essential duties of christian obedience be conjoined, in constant and inseparable alliance. Let it never be said, that you are deficient in the principles or in the practice of justice, in your secular transactions, while aspiring to the praise of christian benevolence, or of exalted piety. Let it not be in the power, either of any christian brother, or of any man of the world, to say, that you have injured him, in his fortune, or in his fame, or even in his feelings. On the contrary, "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever

things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

*Lastly*, In the entire conduct of life, let there be a constant reference to death and to eternity.

"Let me remember," said the pious Doddridge, "that, through the mercy of God in a Redeemer, I hope I am within a few days of heaven!" Among the resolutions of President Edwards were the following:—

"Resolved; never to do any thing which I should be afraid to do, if it were the last hour of my life."

"Resolved; to think much, on all occasions, of my own dying, and of the common circumstances which attend death."

"Resolved; that I will live so as I shall wish I had done, when I come to die. I frequently hear persons, in old age, say, how they would live, if they were to live their lives over again:—Resolved; that I will live just so, as I can think I shall wish I had done, supposing I live to old age."

"Resolved; to endeavour, to my utmost, to act as I can think I should do, if I had already seen the happiness of heaven and the torments of hell."

Let such resolutions be ours! Never, indeed,

let us make them in our own strength, but in reliance on the promised aid of that Holy Spirit, who can "strengthen us with all might in the inner man." Let us not think it sufficient to resolve; but let us habitually enter on the work of self-examination, in order to ascertain whether these resolutions have been carried into effect. Let us not only review our conduct, but let us also scrutinize our hearts; and that we may effectually guard against the danger of self-deception, let our prayer ever be:—"Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

## LECTURE XII.

THE OPERATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF HOLINESS  
IN THE DISCHARGE OF THE DUTIES ARISING OUT  
OF SOCIAL INTERCOURSE.

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THE DUTIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

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EPHES. v. 33.

*Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.*

IN several preceding discourses, I have endeavoured to exhibit the prominent manifestations of Holiness, in the exercise of *Self-Government*. I now proceed to the consideration of those displays of Holiness, which are required in the conduct of *social intercourse*. These admit of a triple classification, having reference to the duties of the Domestic Relations;—the duties we owe to our Christian Brethren:—and the duties we owe to our Fellow-men at large.

Among the Relations of *Domestic Life*, the precedence, in point of order and importance, belongs indisputably to the *Conjugal Union*.

The origin of this most interesting and endearing of all relations, we trace to the wisdom and the goodness of the benevolent Author of our being. It was He who made man,—and who therefore knew best how to consult his happiness—that said: “It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a help-meet for him.” If this was said in Paradise, where there was joy without sorrow and without sin, how much more must man require this solace, where both sins and sorrows abound. That we may be prepared to estimate aright the advantages arising from the wedded union, as well as the attendant obligations, let our inquiries be directed:—

FIRST, To the prerequisites to the right formation of the Conjugal Union:—

SECONDLY, To the duties arising out of this relation:—and

THIRDLY, To the advantages resulting from a right discharge of its duties.

FIRST, Let our views be directed to the grand prerequisites.

Without the slightest hesitancy it may be affirmed, that the most important of all these is *the possession of real religion*.

The individual who is destitute of the essential principles of personal religion, labours under a disqualification for the enjoyment of true happiness, whether in a single or a married state; and

if there be a disqualification for enjoying, there must of necessity be also for imparting, happiness which deserves the name. Suppose the husband to be a christian, but not the wife ; or reverse the statement, (and it will probably accord with a greater number of facts,) and suppose the wife to be a christian, but not the husband ; what would be the aspect of such a union, on the happiness of the party distinguished by real religion ? To affirm that the aspect would be highly inauspicious, and the tendency decidedly unfavourable, is to assert less than the truth. Exalted far above the attainments of ordinary christians must be the piety and spirituality, which would be secure against the deteriorating influence of an unrenewed mind, in the intimacies of the nearest relation : and can it for a moment be supposed, that a christian of high degree would be induced, by any earthly considerations, to incur the hazard ? On this point let me address the most earnest and affectionate advice to my young friends, who have not yet entered on the endearing union, and who have never yet given any pledge with a view to its formation. Are your principles, let me ask, so firm ; are your religious feelings so ardent ; are your habits so devotional, that you can have no cause for apprehension, under circumstances most unfriendly to your highest interests ? And even were there no danger of spiritual declension, and

were there no difficulty arising from such a union, in reference to "growth in grace," would there be nothing to dread from the want of harmony of feeling on subjects of vital importance? Would there be no drawback on the pleasures of domestic intercourse, from the total want of congeniality of feeling, on subjects regarded by the one party with deep emotion, and by the other with cold indifference? Do you value the joys super-added by companionship, in all the pleasures which pertain to "the life that now is," and do you attach no value to the joys of companionship in any of the pleasures which pertain to "the life which is to come?" Should you contemplate a separation by death from the object most beloved, as the calamity most of all to be dreaded; and do you think that the bereavement would derive no addition of agony from the fear lest the separation should be eternal? But why should I multiply interrogations such as these, or deem it necessary to make reiterated appeals to any who really regard the authority of Christ? Ought it not to be abundantly sufficient to adduce even in its simplest form, without comment or enforcement, the authoritative intimation of an Apostle, that it is lawful for a christian to marry "only in the Lord?"

But in addition to this joint participation of christian privileges, there is required *a general congeniality of disposition, of temper, and of habits.*

If there be not an intimate alliance of minds and hearts, the union exists but in name. Now in order to this, there must be a communion of thought and of feeling, arising out of coincidence of views, and sentiments, and taste, on a great proportion of the subjects which engage attention and excite interest. If the expression of opinion and of emotion on the part of the one, call forth no reciprocity of feeling on the part of the other, the result must be a painful disappointment of expectation; and the frequent recurrence of that result must have a tendency to restrain the spontaneous utterance of thought, and to chill and freeze the genial current of the soul. Now it would be altogether unreasonable to expect a general congeniality of feeling—a prevailing harmony of intellect with intellect and heart with heart, unless there be some accordance of natural disposition, and some correspondence of early habits of thought. What prospect can there be of wedded happiness, if intellectual cultivation give a character to one mind and contented ignorance to the other;—if delicacy and refinement be allied to coarseness and vulgarity;—if a disposition to gaiety be as decided on the part of the one, as the love of domestic seclusion on the part of the other;—if inclination to prudent economy have to contend with a spirit of profuse expenditure; or if a contracted covetousness of



soul be ever struggling against a noble liberality of disposition! It is the want of this congeniality of feeling which is most of all to be dreaded when there is a decided disparity of age, or of rank, or of connexions. Every period of life, as well as every station in life, may be supposed to exert a characteristic influence on the mind. It modifies imperceptibly and indescribably the prevailing ideas of men and of things, so that a wide disparity must increase, to a fearful extent, the danger of frequent dissonance of feeling. It is true that mutual affection may, in a thousand instances, restrain the utterance, and even repress the indulgence of feelings which it may be supposed will call forth no kindred emotion; but who does not perceive, that the necessity or the desirableness of such restraint, must be inimical to enjoyment; and must militate most powerfully against that highest species of delight, which in the well constituted union of wedded love, is the characteristic feature and unrivalled charm of domestic happiness!

Intimately connected with a regard to the prerequisites now specified, is the adoption of a right course of conduct with a view to the actual formation of the marriage union. On this subject let me be permitted to offer two brief hints of advice. The first is;—*Seek, by earnest prayer, divine direction.* If “in every thing” we are

required. "by prayer and supplication, to make our requests known unto God," shall there be an exception in the case which most deeply involves our happiness for life? If we are encouraged in all our ways to acknowledge God, by the assurance that he will then direct our steps, shall we forget the duty of that acknowledgment, and the value of that guidance, in the most momentous of earthly concerns? If the servant of Abraham, when commissioned to obtain a wife for Isaac, from "the house of his master's brethren," on approaching the residence of Bethuel, neglected not to lift up his heart in prayer to the divine disposer of events, that "he would send him good speed, and shew kindness to his master Abraham," by a gracious interposition of his providence, how little do they consult their true interests, who ask not counsel of the Lord, even when about to form that union for themselves!

The other hint of advice which I would affectionately offer is;—*Avoid all precipitancy, even in cherishing, and still more in avowing, the feelings of attachment.*

It is passing strange, that a slight and transient and superficial acquaintance, should be deemed sufficient to justify the formation of a union, which death only is to dissolve. Is it deemed sufficient to authorize articles of agreement

for a partnership in business, in which there must be a joint participation in the efforts and in the hazards of commercial enterprise? If the ruin of the fortune be the frequent consequence of the want of caution and discrimination in the one case, is the ruin of happiness a less frequent result of the absence of wisdom in the other? Let it be also considered, that the impulse of sudden admiration, unsustained by the accurate knowledge of character, disposition and temper, is not by any means to be trusted. It may be altogether wanting in permanence. It may be as transient as it was strong. It may be the admiration of a being, previously portrayed by the imaginative mind, under the influence of impassioned feeling, in all the charms of human and angelic excellence, and now suddenly identified, under a pleasing illusion, with the aspect and the name of the object admired. That illusion being dispelled, severe indeed must be the resulting disappointment. And is not the declaration of feelings which are affirmed to be unalterable, but which prove to be evanescent, a most palpable act of injustice to the party addressed? Ought there not first to be the consciousness, that the feelings of exclusive attachment are incorporated with all the susceptibilities, and all the energies of the soul; before they are intentionally disclosed, with a view to

wedded love? And being once explicitly avowed, and favourably received, ought they not to have the firmness of the rock, and the permanence of life? Ought they not to have, in the estimation of both the parties, the sacredness of an oath, and the power of a binding law? Should not all the considerations which belong to honour, and conscience, and religion, secure the continuance of fidelity, first, to the desired and anticipated period of marriage; and then, through every day and hour of wedded union, till the last sad moment of dreaded separation?

The indispensable prerequisites, then, having been thus considered, let me proceed,

SECONDLY, To direct your attention to the duties which arise out of the conjugal union, when actually commenced.

These may be distributed into two classes, of which, the more comprehensive includes *the duties devolving equally on both parties in the marriage contract.*

The *first* and the *most* important of these is, undivided and ardent love.

If love, in an inferior sense, be due to every human being; if it be due in a higher degree to a countryman, or a neighbour, and still more to any relative nearly allied; what must be the nature, and what must be the degree, of the affection due to that individual, who has been

singled out of the mass of the world's population; and who, with reciprocal and confiding attachment, has entrusted to the friend beloved the happiness of future life? If there be not, even in the very first commencement of this union, genuine and powerful affection, the alliance is unprincipled in its origin, and destitute of all security for domestic enjoyment. But if there be at the outset of married life, strong and ardent love, there is every cheering prospect, not only of its continuance, but of its progressive increase in fervour and in tenderness. And is it not inexpressibly delightful to be assured, that in yielding the wedded heart to the susceptibilities of fond affection, we not only obey the dictates of the voice of nature, but also of nature's God? Can the language of requirement be more imperative than that which enforces this affection, in the verses of apostolic authority from which I have selected the text:—"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but

nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one. —Let every one of you in particular so love his wife, even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband." The reverence here inculcated is, beyond all doubt, the respectful deference of love; and it must be the offspring of that "perfect love which casteth out fear, because fear hath torment." Should the question be asked—why should the tenderness of love be so strongly inculcated on the husband, and only indirectly, and by implication; on the wife, I know of only one satisfactory answer to the inquiry: it is, that the danger of failure, in this respect, is more to be apprehended on the part of the husband, than on the part of the wife. Now, on examining the beautiful and impressive paragraph which has been read, I find not one single caution against too great an intensity of conjugal attachment; nor do I find, in any other part of the inspired volume, one single intimation, that against such a danger it is incumbent upon us to guard. I find many a spirit-stirring caution against the love of the world, against the love of money, against the inordinate love of self; but I find not one, against an excessive love of a husband or of a

wife. And the inquiry well deserves a place in our thoughts :—exists there the danger which has been frequently supposed ? There may be many inordinate *expressions* of love ; there may be many misguided methods of *displaying* attachment ; but is there any danger of undue intensity in the affection itself ? Would personal happiness, or domestic happiness, or the happiness of society at large, be augmented by a diminution, in any instances, of the ardour and tenderness of wedded love ? Is there any tendency in conjugal love to withdraw the heart from the blessed God, to whom unquestionably is due our supreme and most ardent affection ? Does the one affection necessarily or naturally interfere with the exercise of the other affection ? Are they not sufficiently distinct and independent, to be placed beyond the danger of a collision of interests ? Must it not be allowed that, from diversities of disposition and opinion, and from infirmities of temper, there is incomparably more danger of loving too little than of loving too much ? Can any instance be really found, in which a man would love God more, by loving his endeared associate less ? Above all let me ask, what is the nature and what is the intensity of that love, which the inspired Apostle exhibits, as the exemplar and model of the love which husbands should cherish towards their wives ? “ Husbands, love your wives, *even*

*as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it."* Was ever conjugal love more intense than this; or did it ever, in any instance, attain this intensity? If not, where is the evidence of the danger supposed?

The *second* of the duties I would specify, is—

The Promotion of each other's highest interests.

On the supposition of both being real christians, what should be an object of so great solicitude, as the advancement of each other's spiritual and eternal welfare? Should it not be their habitual endeavour, to conduct themselves towards each other, "as heirs together of the grace of life, that their prayers be not hindered?" Should they not freely converse on the things that pertain to their eternal peace? Should they not read and study together the word of truth, and pour forth their supplications at the throne of the heavenly grace? Should they not guard each other against the dangers to which they are respectively exposed, and fortify each other against the temptations by which they may be individually assailed, and encourage each other, by the best consolations, under the troubles which each may have to endure?

On the supposition, that the one may have reason to fear, lest the other be not a christian in the sight of God, how tender, and anxious, and operative should be the solicitude



cherished! "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? Or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" And can there be in thy heart the absence of powerful emotions towards the partner of thy joys and cares, in the contemplation of an eternal world, and of the judgment-seat of Christ? Redouble the importance of thy prayers, and the assiduity of thy tenderest and thy wisest efforts; in the hope that, by the power of the life-giving Spirit, thine may be the unutterable joy, of saving from death eternal, that soul which thou lovest as thine own!

*Thirdly,* Let there be the most unreserved and unsuspecting confidence, arising out of the most intimate communion of spirit, and absolute identity of interests.

Married love acknowledges no separation of interests. The identity of the interests of both the contracting parties was solemnly recognized at the altar, having been, it may be presumed, deeply and delightfully felt before. Being "of one heart and of one soul," having "all things common," and neither being inclined to regard any of the things possessed as restrictively pertaining to either, what reason can exist for reserve, on any of the affairs of life, or on any of the desires of the heart, or on any sentiments of the mind? What inducement can there be to

conceal a single thought, or wish, or transaction, or occurrence? Is there not an inexpressible delight in the unfettered communication of views and feelings, where it is certain, that confidence is due, and that trust can never be misplaced? Is not this delight to be regarded as one of the most rare and the most precious privileges, to be enjoyed in human intercourse; and is it to be found at all, if not in the bosom of conjugal endearment?

*Fourthly*, Let there be cherished and displayed the most tender and affectionate sympathy.

There should be sympathy in that most extended sense of the term, which accords with its original import;—there should be the vivid participation of every feeling, whether it be joyous, or whether it be sorrowful. More especially should there be a tender susceptibility of fellow-feeling, in every time of trouble, and under every pressure of distress. The emotions of the one heart should be attuned to the emotions of the other heart; so that there should be no cause for the adoption of the complaint pensively expressed in oriental phrase:—"We have played to you upon the pipe, but ye have not danced; we have sung mournful songs to you, but ye have not lamented."

With respect to the emotions and the attentions of tender sympathy, perhaps the danger of being found wanting is, for the most part, on the

side of the husband. His engagements usually remove him, during some of the hours of every day, from the scene of domestic solitudes and fatigues ; and his firmer frame is less adapted to awaken his sympathies with the constitution or infirmities of "the weaker vessel." But let him not be unmindful of the numerous toils and cares and sufferings, attendant especially on maternal love, from which in his own person he is exempt. Let him enter, even with feminine delicacy and tenderness, into all the sorrows which he is pledged to soothe, and, to his very utmost, to alleviate. He will not be the less manly in soul, for being thus more feminine in sympathy, and more gentle in spirit ; on the contrary, he will approximate the more closely to the character of Him "who loved the church and gave himself for it," and to the most prominent feature of that character which was admirably sketched by the Apostle, when he said to the Corinthians,—“I beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ.”

*Fifthly*, Let there be the mutual exercise of indulgence and forbearance.

Where is the character that is absolutely perfect ? Where is the wisdom of expecting that perfection, even in the object most beloved ? Let not, then, the discovery of occasional imperfections either alienate, or suspend, or diminish, the exercise of love. Let self-knowledge, combined

with an acquaintance with the history of our common nature, preserve from the injurious effects, resulting from the expectation of super-human perfectness in this imperfect world. If love can cover, with its expanded mantle, "a multitude of sins," well may it cover a few imperfections. If in the general intercourse of social life, still more within the circle of domestic endearment, should there be the display, if ever occasion may require, of that love "which suffereth long and is kind;—which is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, and endureth all things."

On the second class of conjugal duties, comprising *those which are peculiar to each of the parties*, let it suffice to offer a very few remarks; it being certain, that if the duties of the former class be loved and practised, a willing regard will be rendered to those of the latter.

To the most important of these, our attention is directed in the text and in the context.—"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore, as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing.—Let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that

she reverence her husband." By the law of Christ, then, it is decided, that when, from the nature of the case, authority must be exercised by the one, and submission by the other, it is the part of the husband to rule; and the part of the wife to obey. Let it not, however, for a moment be forgotten, that two things are obviously supposed, in this wise and salutary adjustment of the law of Christ. The one is, that nothing is to be required on the part of the husband, or yielded on the part of the wife, which is opposed to the standard of duty—the revealed will of God. The other is, that no authority is to be exercised or claimed, which is at variance with the principle of conjugal attachment. With these qualifications and restrictions, the law of Christ, which is indeed the law of nature, is equally conducive to the happiness of both the parties in the marriage union.

It remains for us to advert,

—THIRDLY, To the advantages attendant on the right discharge of these conjugal duties.

1. Each of the parties derives from the union an improvement of character.

Never do excellencies appear so attractive and so captivating, as when displayed by those we love. If, then, there be on both sides certain characteristic excellencies, how beneficial must be the daily habit of contemplating, and admiring,

and almost imperceptibly of copying, these amiable traits of intellectual and moral and religious character. In addition also to these habits of imitative love, must there not be a direct tendency to improvement of the highest kind, arising out of the very discharge of those duties, which it has been my attempt to specify and enforce? Their tendency is to establish a mild and gentle and generous, but most efficient discipline of wedded love; which is, beyond comparison, (except with love divine!) the most powerful corrective of that greatest bane of society—the selfishness of the human heart. Who has not observed in numerous instances, the exemplification of these remarks, in the improvement of character, and of temper, and of demeanour; yes, and even of the very aspect and expression of the countenance, resulting from a well-constituted union of minds and of hearts?

2. Each of the parties obtains an accession of happiness.

That in many distressing instances, in married life, the gloomy reverse of this is seen and acknowledged, we cannot deny. But can we wonder that this should too often be the result of the marriage union? How many who meet at the altar, with unhallowed principles and feelings, have, in their own character, the very elements of misery, being alike destitute of love to God

and genuine love to man! How many have set at defiance all the considerations, which alone can form the basis of a happy union; and have been guided in their choice by principles the most sordid, the most despicable, and the most delusive! But let the union be effected on christian principles, and with authorized and duly regulated expectations, and there is ample encouragement to anticipate,—if not a perfect paradise of unmingled joy, if not an unclouded day of never-varying brightness, if not a scene unchequered by affliction;—yet a decided and abundant augmentation of delight. It is not too much to say, that a union, effected on christian principles, increases the capacity of delight, and multiplies the sources of delight, and heightens the emotions of delight. And in a world exhibiting the prevalence of sin and of death, and designed only as the passage to another and a better, is it not a great thing to be able to say, that wedded love, under the blessing of Him whose loving-kindness is better than life, can divide, and thereby diminish, all our cares, and double all our comforts, and sweeten all our sorrows!

Let me add, finally, that the benefits realized by the parties themselves are, in a great degree, extended to society at large.

Who can fully estimate the advantages, both

immediate and remote; which society has derived from the holy institution of marriage? Among these incalculable advantages are to be enumerated—the protection and education of the rising race, who would otherwise become the prey of pitiable ignorance and wretchedness;—the benefits accruing from family religion to servants as well as to children;—the excitement given to industrious exertion, of which domestic love is the grand and powerful spring;—the development of dispositions conducive to the order and subordination of the community at large;—and to these let me add,—the high estimation of the female sex, and, as its beneficial result, the civilities and courtesies which give a polish and a charm to the very aspect of society, in almost all its diversified gradations.

And now let me be permitted to suggest, in concluding this discourse, that the consideration of a union which, however endearing, can be only for a time, should conduct our thoughts to that union, with which it was associated in the mind of the Apostle, and by virtue, indeed, of which, the union itself may be renewed, under far happier circumstances, in that world where “they die no more.” I now refer to the union of the soul with Christ—the glorious Bridegroom of his church. It is commenced on earth; it is completed in heaven. Oh, how inconceivably glorious will be that day, in which shall be celebrated,



amid wondering and admiring angels: "the marriage supper of the Lamb!"—"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth;"—said he, who was indulged with the apocalyptic vision—"for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away, and there was no more sea." And I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God, out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." How momentous then is the inquiry which should be instituted by every one of us:—"Am I united to the Lord Jesus Christ, by a genuine and vital faith? Does the love of Christ, who is himself altogether lovely, find a congenial dwelling-place in my heart? Am I sanctified and cleansed by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, through the instrumentality of the word of truth?" If, by the infinite compassion and mercy of God, you have encouragement to return satisfactory replies to such inquiries as these, you shall hereafter mingle your grateful acclamations

with those of the blest above, who are represented as exclaiming in rapture of spirit—"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.—Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!"

## LECTURE XIII.

### THE DUTIES OF PARENTS.

EPHES. VI. 4.

*And ye Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.*

PARENTAL authority is, in its own nature, more absolute, in its proper exercise more gentle, and in its direct tendency more beneficial, than any other species of human government. When administered on principles dictated alike by nature and by scripture, it makes the nearest approach which is possible on the part of man upon earth, to the government of our Father in heaven, whose power none can control, whose goodness none can dispute. That a power so great as that which belongs to parents, is liable to mal-administration, it cannot be denied. There may be too much coercion, or there may be too much indulgence. There may be culpable severity, or there may be culpable connivance. The combination of

gentleness with firmness of control, will be the most effectual preventive of the evil against which Parents are cautioned in our text ;—"Ye Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." The same injunction is given in the Epistle to the Colossians, and there is added a powerful reason :—"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Scarcely need I observe, that the injunction here addressed to *Fathers* is equally binding upon *Mothers* ; and that the latter part of the text, which inculcates the early training of the mind and heart, is adapted to awaken the strongest and the tenderest emotions of maternal solicitude. It cannot be too deeply impressed upon the heart of a christian mother, that the elements of moral and religious culture belong to the nursery ; and that no human being upon earth possesses the power or the facilities attendant on maternal influence. To Mothers, then, no less than to Fathers, let us regard the words of the Apostle, as addressed :—"Provoke not your children to wrath ; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Let our attention be now directed,

To the Objects which claim the chief solicitude of christian parents :—

The Principles under the guidance of which these objects should be pursued :—and

The Inducements which should secure a due

regard to these Objects and these principles. Contemplate—

FIRST, The Objects which claim the christian parent's chief solicitude.

The *first* object should unquestionably be, *to train up a child for an eternity of happiness.*

You will not demand of me an argument to prove, that this should be the grand and primary object of parental anxiety. The man who admits it not, must be an infidel in heart; and the man who, admitting it, feels not in some degree its awful and transcendent importance, gives little evidence of natural affection, which deserves the name, even to his own offspring. The training for eternity is the education inculcated in the text. Two distinct parts of this training are specified by the Apostle: the one is “nurture,” or, as the word in the original denotes, *discipline*; the other is “admonition,” or rather, *instruction*. The precept, then, of the Apostle is;—“train up your children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord;”—in the instruction which the Lord has provided, and in the discipline which the Lord has prescribed.

The *instruction* must form the basis of the discipline. It must commence in the very dawn of reason, with the simple, and striking, and elementary principles of truth. As soon as the child of your affections can distinguish between right

and wrong in his words and in his ways, endeavour to infix in his conscience the conviction that he is a sinner. As soon as the history of our Lord Jesus Christ can be rendered intelligible to his capacity, direct his attention to the Saviour, and tell him of the Redeemer's wondrous love, and bitter sufferings, and cleansing blood, and precious promises, and condescending regard to the young. As soon as any idea can be formed of things unseen and future, conduct his thoughts to heaven and to eternity. Amidst all the difficulties you may have to encounter, in the effort to bring down the most exalted subjects to the level of the comprehension of a child, you will obtain many a delightful encouragement, in tracing the gradual expansion of the mind, and in perceiving that its interesting developments are both earlier and more rapid, than you had previously been accustomed to expect. And have there not been instances, beyond expression gladdening to the parental heart, in which even "out of the mouth of babes and sucklings God has perfected praise!"

Let the course of instruction be *scriptural*, in the best and highest sense. Derive from the pure and sacred source of revealed truth your earliest lessons, your most touching appeals, and your most tender expostulations. And when your children can read the book of life, direct them to its most interesting contents; explain its truths in

the simplest terms, and enforce them by the most affecting motives. Apply to their daily perusal of the word of God the principle of catechetical instruction; and by well-chosen questions, arising out of the chapters and verses which they may read, endeavour to fix their attention, to cultivate their understanding, to strengthen their memory, and to impress their hearts.

To instruction must be added *discipline*.

This includes, according to the import of the apostolic expression in the text, not correction merely, but the entire course of moral training by means of precept, and regulation, and restraint, and subjection, and encouragement, and admonition. The due combination of these will often prevent the painful necessity of having recourse to actual punishment, and especially in its severer forms. Seldom, it is presumed, will corporeal castigation be found requisite, under parental training, where early discipline has blended firmness with mildness, and authority with affection. And be it remembered, not only that the degree of punishment ought never to exceed the measure of delinquency, but also that the species of punishment ought never to be such as to impair the sensibility of feeling. Undue severity and harshness of discipline are expressly forbidden in the text, and in the parallel passage, to which I have already adverted, a powerful reason is assigned.

for the prohibition: "Provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." Let no method, then, be adopted, which may have a tendency to discourage what is good, or to excite what is evil, in their hearts. Let not parents or instructors discourage the children entrusted to their care, by unreasonable demands on their intellect, or on their feelings. Let them not exact efforts of attention, or of memory, or of discrimination, or of invention, beyond their capacities, or beyond their years. Let them not invest the system of intellectual or religious discipline with a forbidding and depressing gloom. Let them not demand a perfection of habits which it would be unreasonable, at so early a period, to expect. Let them not excite disquietude and fretfulness, in the minds of their children, by thwarting their inclinations without apparent cause. Let them not confound an accident, even through want of care, with a moral and wilful offence. Whenever correction may be necessary, let it be evident, beyond all doubt, that it is administered, not in anger, but in love;—not to indulge any feelings of irritation on the part of the parent, but, under the imperative conviction of duty, to promote the best interests of the child.

The *second* object of parental solicitude should be, *to train up a child, with a judicious regard to his anticipated station and engagements in life.*



It may be safely asserted, as a general principle, that a parent should give his children the best education which it is in his power to provide. It is incomparably the best fortune which he can bestow. When conducted on right principles, it is more conducive than any other possession which man can convey, both to the happiness and the usefulness of life. In order, however, to secure the attainment of these objects, it must be wisely adapted to the rank, the circumstances, and the capacities of the individual, and especially to the pursuits in which it is expected that he will be subsequently engaged.

In the choice of an employment and situation in life, let christian parents act on christian principles. Let the situation be viewed, not only in its aspect on the interests of the present life, but also in its aspect on the interests of the life to come. To the question—Does it promise to be *lucrative*—let there be added the still more important inquiry—Does it promise to be *safe*, as it regards the concerns of the immortal soul? Let it be ascertained, with deep solicitude, what is the nature of the temptations to which it may expose; what is the character of the society to which it will introduce; what are the principles on which its business is conducted? “Let parents,” says Dr. Chalmers, “calculate on the possibilities of moral corruption as well as on the possibilities of

lucrative employment; and let them look well to exposures and acquaintances, as well as to the common-place object of a situation in the world. And when you talk of a good line for your children, just think a little more of the line that leadeth to eternity; and have a care, lest you be the instruments of putting them on such a path of danger, that it shall only be by the very rarest miracle of grace, that they can be kept from falling, or be renewed again unto repentance."

Such, then, being the objects which chiefly claim parental solicitude, let us consider;

SECONDLY, The Principles, under the guidance of which these Objects should be pursued.

The course of training which is designed to prepare, not only for "the life that now is, but for that also which is to come;" must necessarily require, on the part of parents, patient, unwearied and persevering exertion. In order, therefore, to direct and to animate, in these continued efforts, it is important to have the guidance of some uniform principles of procedure which are calculated to conduct to the desired result. Of such principles, I shall now endeavour to specify and illustrate a few.

*First*, Let the training be carried on by the prevailing influence of affection.

No authority is so firmly established, as that which has its foundation in love. A sovereign,

if wise, will be desirous of reigning in the hearts of his subjects. A tutor, if enlightened, will wish to secure a place in the affections of his pupil. A master, if considerate, will wish to acquire the good-will of those employed in his service. Let me add, "the blessed and only potentate," whose power is uncontrolled, delights to rule by love. No other obedience than that which springs from love is to him acceptable; and in order that such obedience may be spontaneous and cheerful, he reveals himself in all the glorious attractions of "the love which passeth knowledge." Imitate, then, christian parents, the procedure of the God of love. Let your children have daily evidence, that you love them with strong and constant affection. Let them feel, that in their Father, and in their Mother, they have a friend, as well as a superior:—a friend to be loved and prized and trusted, beyond all other friends on earth:—a friend, into whose ear and into whose heart they can unbosom their every feeling, and their every wish, and their every fear; assured that they can never fail to obtain the tenderest sympathy as well as the wisest counsel.

*Secondly,* Let the training be carried on, not only by direct injunctions, but also by an indirect yet powerful influence; extending to every point, on which may depend the formation and development of character.

To that which might be termed *indirect education*, I am accustomed to attach the very highest importance. It may begin almost at the earliest, and be carried on almost to the latest period of parental intercourse. How many of the ideas and impressions of children are derived, not from studied lessons and systematic instruction, but from that which they have casually heard and seen, even when they themselves were not, in the least, the objects of attention. How many things have they probably seen and heard, which have produced upon their minds effects to be deplored. How much good may be secured, by improving the various opportunities, arising in the intercourse of domestic life, for the conveyance of valuable suggestions, in a form best calculated to interest and impress their hearts. The incidents of almost every day will usually present occasions and facilities for attempting this, under circumstances of high encouragement; and the opportunities thus afforded, appear to me to place, in the strongest light, the peculiar and unrivalled advantages, which children may receive from their residence under the parental roof. Parents have it in their power to act on the principle, of reiterating lessons and counsels of the highest value, at the happiest moments; according to the injunction thus admirably given by Moses, the man of God:—"And these words which I

command thee this day, shall be in thine heart; and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children; and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up: and thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand; and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes; and thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

The venerable lawgiver then proceeds on the supposition, that their children would ask;—"What mean these testimonies, and statutes, and judgments?" And the parents are directed to avail themselves with eagerness of such inquiries, and to reply, in words of cheering encouragement:—"The Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, *for our good always.*"

On the same principle of indirect yet powerful influence, a superintendence should be exercised over *the course of reading* pursued by children. A taste for reading it is of the greatest importance to cultivate in early life; since it opens channels of the best instruction, and places within the sphere of domestic employment, the most interesting materials for the occupation of hours of leisure. Never was there a period, in the ages that are past, in which so happy a selection of books for the youthful mind could have been

made, as is practicable at the present day ; nor was there ever a period, in which parental wisdom was so urgently required, in making a safe and a beneficial selection. Not only have the elements of science and literature been presented, in their most simple and most attractive forms, and brought down to the level of juvenile capacity ; but the same process of simplifying and embellishing has been employed to subserve the cause of dangerous error, of disguised and of avowed infidelity, and of principles equally hostile to happiness, to morals, and to religion. The indiscriminate perusal of works of fiction also, whether in prose or poetry, is calculated to induce consequences, which a pious parent cannot contemplate without appalling dread. It has a tendency at once to vitiate the taste ;—to give undue excitement to the power of imagination, at the expense of every other intellectual energy ;—to subjugate reason to the dominion of the passions ;—to contaminate the habitual flow of thought, by contaminating the heart, its fountain ;—to exhibit under false and fascinating colours, a course of amusement and dissipation, and to overspread with melancholy gloom the scenes of common life, so as to render its duties irksome ; and its lawful pleasures insipid. Judge, then, ye parents, whether indiscriminate reading can be permitted with safety ; and whether a mild and

gentle and persuasive authority, ought not to be exercised, in the choice of books for your children.

On the same principle, a judicious superintendence should be exercised over *the associates of youth*. The influence of their companions is scarcely less powerful than the influence of their parents. It is in society of their own age that there is attained an entire freedom from restraint, and full scope for the development of every disposition, and of every feeling. The susceptibility of one mind is acted upon by the energy of another mind; which, in its turn, yields to the effect of reciprocal excitement. The original or the borrowed remarks of one young person, especially if playful and lively, will pass current through the whole circle of companions, and may produce more effect on the habits of thought and feeling, than any sentiment enforced by a powerful writer, or by a living instructor. What then may be anticipated, if youthful associates are profane, or indelicate, or deceitful? "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise; but the companion of fools shall be destroyed." In illustration of the danger arising from this source, let me place before you an instance of the effect produced by unprincipled companions, on the character of a young man, who received in childhood the advantages of a religious education. He was visited in his last illness by a valued

friend of mine, who has introduced the narrative of his visit into his valuable treatise on Domestic Religion. "Soon after I entered his room," says Mr. Innes of Edinburgh, "we were left alone, and while he was labouring for breath, he thus addressed me:—'I have been living, Sir, for fifteen years without God, and without hope. I most unhappily fell into dissolute habits, and into the company of some who had imbibed themselves, and too successfully instilled into me, the maxims of the French philosophers. I went on in this course for several years; but, I now clearly see, that men have recourse to such systems, not from a conviction of their truth, but to palliate, if they can, a life of licentiousness. These maxims never gave me satisfaction, even at the time I professed to embrace them. I felt a secret conviction that there was truth in what I had been taught in early life. I always looked for some favourable opportunity, when I should retrace my steps; but when I was making resolutions so to do, every new assault of temptation quite overcame me.'—He seemed to experience the deepest remorse at the recollection of his criminal conduct, and most feelingly lamented, that he could not get his mind impressed as he wished, with what he now saw to be the deeply interesting truths contained in the word of God. In this state, his strength gradually declined.



I saw him repeatedly, and in a few weeks after I first visited him, he expired!" — Christian parents, tremble at the thought of your children being associated with the dissolute and the corrupt; and adopt the best and the wisest measures, for inducing them to select as their companions, such as fear God, and honour their father and their mother.

*Thirdly,* Let the training be facilitated by the force of parental example.

Let your children perceive that religion has actually done that for you, which you desire it should do for them. Let it appear, that your character and conduct have been formed in the mould of Christianity, so as to exhibit its exact and beautiful impression. Let it appear, that its sacred principles of truth, and purity, and justice, and honour, and kindness, have been instilled into your very soul, and thereby embodied in your actions. Let your children perceive, that the religion of the gospel has diffused peace through your mind, and caused the smile of benignant cheerfulness to illumine your countenance. Who can appreciate the value, or calculate the influence, of such an exemplification of christian principles? At a recent ordination to the pastoral office, the young minister acknowledged, that at one period of his early life, he was strongly inclined towards the principles of

infidelity. He stated, that many of the arguments, adduced in favour of revealed religion, failed to carry conviction to his mind; but that there was one argument which pressed upon him with overpowering and resistless force:—it was *the holy and consistent character of his own Father!*

*Fourthly*, Let the training be carried on with a spirit of fervent prayer, and encouraging dependence on the promised blessing of God.

Full well the christian parent knows, that while instrumentality belongs to him, efficiency belongs alone to God. Full well he knows, that the wisest and the kindest methods will be employed in vain, unless grace be given from above. He cannot forget, that “that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; so that except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” But neither can he forget, that the language of *promise*, with regard to *the grant* of divine influence, is as forcible and explicit, as the language of *assertion* in reference to the *necessity* of that influence. “Fear not, O Jacob, my servant,” said the Lord God of Israel; “for I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring: and they shall spring up as among the grass, as

willows by the water-courses. One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel." Will, then, the God of truth, "who keepeth covenant and mercy," deny himself, or allow his promise to fall unaccomplished to the ground? The honour of Deity is pledged for the fulfilment of the promise. And if it must, of necessity, be carried into effect, let me ask, is the verification to be expected in the neglect, or in the discharge, of parental duties? Is not diligence on the part of the parents, when combined with faith and prayer, connected in the divine purposes and dispensations, with the conveyance of blessings to the children? He who said, "I know Abraham, that he will command his children and his household after him, that they shall keep the way of the Lord," said also to that father of the faithful, "I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee." Pray, then, christian parents, for your children, with all the importunity of Abraham's honoured descendant; who, when pleading for the preservation of his family in a night of imminent danger, "as a prince had power with God," and by his undiscouraged "wrestling" at length prevailed. Has perseverance in parental supplications no power at the throne of grace? Have you not

yourselves known encouraging indications of its success? And have there not been instances around us, in which entire and numerous families, in answer to parental prayer, have been "all taught of God?" May your families, my beloved friends, be all added to the happy number!

It now remains for us to consider,

**THIRDLY,** The Inducements which should secure a due regard to Parental Obligations.

Let me urge—

*First,* A consideration of the invaluable opportunities which Parents can secure.

You have access to the mind of your child, in all its simplicity, in all its tenderness, and in all its freshness. It is open to every impulse; and every impression has the charm of novelty. You can summon to your aid the principle of youthful curiosity, and you have it in your power to excite unbounded interest. No inveteracy of prejudice militates against your instructions; no sophistical reasonings bar access to the heart. To you are given the means of rendering every important event subservient to the object of your solicitude; and even the incidents of every day tributary to your purpose. Have you duly reflected on the value of opportunities such as these? Is it your anxious desire to improve them to the utmost? Should they be neglected; and should the future history of your children impel you to a painful

and self-accusing retrospect of the years they passed under the paternal roof, what will be the pungency of your unavailing regrets !

*Secondly*, Let the minds of christian parents be alive to a sense of the obligations they have recognized, in the solemn act of presenting their children for baptism.

“What meaneth this service ?” What were the sentiments and feelings which the administration of this ordinance to your infant offspring awakened in your hearts ? Did you not feel on that occasion a peculiar solemnity of spirit ? Did you not give, by that expressive act, a voluntary and sacred pledge, confirmatory of the previous obligation, to train up your child in the discipline and instruction of the Lord ? Will you not, then, be solicitous to redeem that pledge ; lest the very administration of this instructive and encouraging ordinance should hereafter bear witness to your criminal inconsistency and neglect ?

*Thirdly*, Let there be a frequent consideration of the shortness and uncertainty of life.

Interesting and intimate as is the relation between the parent and the child, think how soon and how suddenly it may be dissolved ! The life of the father is uncertain, and the life of the mother is uncertain, and the life of the child is uncertain. Should the son or the daughter of your fond affections be unexpectedly snatched

away by death, after having arrived at the years of responsibility, and yet without affording an encouraging hope that there was a renewal of heart and a preparation for heaven, what must be the anguish of your heart ; and how fearful must be the superadded poignancy of that anguish, if you feel that you have reason for self-upbraidings on the ground of parental procrastination and negligence ! Should you, on the other hand, find yourselves approaching the confines of eternity, and about to leave the children of your love in this world of temptation and danger, without any satisfactory evidence of their personal religion, how may the thought come over your mind at the last hour, like a darkening cloud over the face of the setting sun, that you have been culpably wanting in fervency of prayer and in assiduity of exertion, to promote the interests of their immortal souls ! Enter, then, christian parents, into those benignant and heavenly emotions which animated the heart of the holy prophet, who was about to ascend in his ethereal chariot, to the world above ; when, feeling that his translation to glory would yield him still greater felicity, if he should have the joy of augmenting the happiness of his successor in office, he said to Elisha ;—" Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee !"

*Lastly*, Let there be an anticipation of the meeting between Parents and Children, which

must hereafter take place before the judgment-seat of Christ.

At that eventful and decisive day, there must pass in review before the eye of conscience, and before the eye of the Judge, the course of training pursued by the parent, and the course of conduct adopted by the child. And the results—what will they be? Approval or condemnation! The blessing which invites to glory, or the curse which dooms to woe! Ah, what would be the agony of beholding the children entrusted to your care, on the left hand of the Judge, and of hearing from their lips the bitterness of reproach! On the contrary, what must be the extatic blessedness of being encircled by the objects of your tenderest love, as you occupy a glorious station on the right hand of Him that sitteth on the throne, and being able to say, with adoring gratitude:—"Here, O Lord, are we and the children thou hast given us!" May this be your unspeakable happiness, through the merit and oblation of that Redeemer, who "loved us and gave himself for us;" to whom be glory throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

## LECTURE XIV.

### THE DUTIES OF CHILDREN.

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EPHES. VI. 1, 2.

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise.*

THERE are two methods of pursuing happiness which are directly opposed to each other: the one is, the pursuit of our own enjoyment at the expense of the happiness of those around us; the other is, the pursuit of our own gratification, in the effort to promote the happiness of others. The former is the method to which multitudes are impelled, by the selfishness of a depraved heart; but it never fails to issue in disappointment. The latter is the method to which we are directed by the religion of the bible; and it never fails to verify the assertion, that "Godliness is profitable for all things." We cannot be rendered blessings to others, without being ourselves the recipients of blessedness. This assertion might be verified



by the most extensive observations on human agency and human happiness, in all the intercourse of man with man; but most striking and most delightful are the proofs and illustrations which present themselves to our view, within the range of the domestic circle. We have seen the intimacy of connexion between being blessed, and being made a blessing, in the most endearing of all the relations of life; and we have seen it also in the relation which Parents sustain towards their Children. It will now, I trust, be made to appear, in the correspondent relation which Children sustain towards their Parents.

I would now direct my address, with every feeling of pastoral affection, to my dear young friends, while I endeavour to exhibit—

The Duties which Children owe to their Parents: and the Motives by which they should be induced to discharge those Duties with promptitude and delight. Let your fixed attention be directed,—

FIRST, To the Duties which Children owe to their Parents.

*First*, It is the duty of children to cherish towards their parents true and strong affection.

Of the six commands of the decalogue which regard our fellow-men, this is the substance: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” Now if you are required thus to love your neighbour in

that extensive sense of the term, which excludes not from its comprehension even the stranger or the foreigner, what must be the order of feelings which belong to filial affection? What do you not owe to your parents? Do you not owe to them your existence, and all those blessings which render that existence desirable? Can you estimate the obligations under which you are laid by their perpetual care, and most affectionate solicitude? Who was it that watched over your infancy with tenderest love, and ever-wakeful vigilance? Who was it that by night, as well as by day, fondly sustained and caressed you, while you knew not the value of maternal endearments? Who were they that hailed the dawn of reason in your infant mind, as the welcome signal for commencing that course of instruction, which has never been discontinued or suspended? Who were they that listened to the first inarticulate lisplings of your voice, even as if it had poured forth a tide of eloquence? Who were they that addressed themselves, by daily exertion, to the labour of the hands or of the mind, that the first period of your life, as well as its subsequent years, might be deficient in none of the sources of enjoyment? Let your hearts reply to questions such as these; and surely it will then be impossible to requite a father's or a mother's tenderness with cold and base ingratitude. Of all the sights which may be

pronounced hideous and monstrous;—of all the objects from which the heart recoils with an instinctive shuddering and abhorrence, not one under heaven is more disgusting or more execrable than a son or a daughter ungrateful, unnatural and rebellious! It is an object on which heaven frowns; on which fiends only can look without horror!

*Secondly*, It is the duty of Children to render to their Parents due honour and respect, throughout the whole of their intercourse.

“Honour thy father and thy mother,” is the express command of God. This honour is due *in private and domestic intercourse*. Never let it be forgotten by a child, even in the hours of most endearing familiarity, that his father and his mother occupy a rank, and sustain towards him a relation, of most decided and unrivalled superiority; so that every thought and feeling—even every thought and feeling of love; and every utterance—even every utterance of affection, should be tempered by filial reverence. Every parental opinion, on every subject of conversation, is entitled to respect, independently of its own merits; because it is the opinion of a father or of a mother; and every parental inclination, not opposed to the will of God, is entitled to respectful regard, because it is the inclination of a father or a mother.

This honour should be most affectionately and respectfully rendered, *in the presence of others*, as well as in domestic retirement. There are many parents so high in the estimation of all around them, that the want of respect from their children, could only have the effect of disgracing the children themselves. But there are instances, in which the parents are not so highly favoured. Perhaps, by the allotments of divine providence, their children have the decided advantage in point of education, of property, and of station in society. This disparity becomes a test of obedience to the divine command—"Honour thy father and thy mother." Oh, how unseemly is it, as well as sinful, for a son to appear forgetful of the claims of his own parents, under circumstances which he should value most of all, for the opportunities they afford of doing justice to those claims! How differently acted Solomon, when invested with all his regal glory. His mother he beheld, on a public occasion, advancing towards the throne, with a view to present some request. "And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand."

*Thirdly*, It is the duty of Children to render prompt and cheerful obedience to the commands of their Parents.

“Children, obey your parents in all things.” Such is the injunction of the inspired Apostle; and the only case of exception which he would have admitted, is that in which the command of a parent is opposed to the command of God. In early life, the obedience of a child should be implicit and immediate. He cannot be supposed to know, in every instance, the reason of a parent’s requirement or prohibition: and, even as he advances in knowledge, he should not display hesitation or reluctance, on the ground of not discerning clearly the propriety of the command. If his compliance be dependent on his own views of expediency, or on the inclinations of his own mind, it amounts not to obedience which deserves the name. The act required may indeed be performed, but there is wanting the principle, without which it can neither be acceptable to parents nor acceptable in the sight of God. If obedience be slow, and sullen, and unwilling, it disgraces the child, no less than it distresses the parent. It is the cheerful promptitude of love, which renders obedience at once delightful to the parent, and delightful to the child.

*Fourthly*, It is the duty of children to attach peculiar importance to parental advice and approbation.

“A wise son heareth his father’s instruction” and counsel, on all that is important in the affairs

of life. A *wise* son, who has emerged from childhood into youth, or from youth into manhood, will be disposed to reason thus:—"How much more I myself know now, than I did a few years ago. How many opinions I have seen reason to change; how many mistakes I have discovered in judgments I once formed; how many schemes of pleasure and amusement, in which I was eager to engage, begin to appear to me now in the same light in which they appeared, at the very time, to my father and my mother. Had I cheerfully and contentedly followed, in every instance, their advice, I should have displayed more wisdom, and afforded them more pleasure. Never will I again undervalue their opinion, or think it safe to take any important step in life, without the benefit of their counsel." Reason thus, and resolve thus, my dear young friends; and by the blessing of God, you will escape a thousand evils into which, by an opposite course, you may be in danger of falling, to your misery, if not to your ruin.

*Fifthly*, It is the duty of children to submit meekly and humbly to parental reproof.

The wisdom and the love which dictate instruction, cannot refrain, and ought not to refrain, from administering also reproof. In the estimation of the wise man, the latter is distinguishable from the former, only as a part from the whole.

"My son," said he, "keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother. Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and *reproofs of instruction* are the way of life." Parental reproof, then, is intimately connected with parental advice; and that son forfeits all claim to the character of wisdom and of dutifulness, who is not disposed meekly to receive the admonition he requires. It is the characteristic of the scorner, that he "heareth not rebuke." To be reprov'd, even with gentleness, is in itself, indeed, unpleasing and unwelcome to the heart of pride. Reprehension offers violence to the spirit of lofty and aspiring independence and self-confidence, which in youth is too often indulged. But it is a salutary violence; and it ought to be offered, on the part of the parent, for the future advantage of the child. Resent it not, my young friends. Faithful admonition is one of the essential duties of friendship, even among equals in age and in station. "Let the righteous smite me," said the Psalmist; "it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." If this be the development of feelings

which belong to the relation of ordinary friendship; how much more should such feelings be displayed in the intercourse of filial and parental love!

*Sixthly*, It is the duty of children to contribute, by every practicable method, to the happiness of their parents.

Innumerable will be the assiduities of an affectionate child, in order to give expression to the feelings of grateful, ardent, and respectful love. These will vary according to the period of life, and the relative circumstances of the parent and the child. While continuing to reside under the paternal roof, there will be a thousand opportunities of anticipating a father's and a mother's wants and wishes, which an attached child will ever embrace with delight. And if there prevail on both sides that feeling, which constitutes the charm of domestic endearment, there will be no effort of affectionate attention, which the child will think too great to exert, nor will there be any which the parent will deem too trivial to accept. It is not a little gratifying, even to a casual visitor in a family, to observe the habits of filial attention spontaneously and cheerfully displayed: and scarcely can he decide, whether, of the happiness arising from these little assiduities, it is the child or the parent that has the larger share.



Nor does filial duty, by any means, arrive at its termination, when the child quits the house of his father, for an establishment of his own. It is then that he ought to feel, more than ever alive to a sense of the kindness he can never repay, and the obligations he can never fully discharge. Are his parents beginning to labour under the infirmities of age?—Let him think of the continued expenditure of their bodily and mental vigour, on the feebleness of his infancy and childhood; and let him put the question to his heart:—what do I owe to my father and to my mother? Are they feeling, in advanced years, the pressure of chilling poverty, or of those distressing apprehensions which arise from diminished resources? Oh, how powerful an appeal is made, by such circumstances as these, to the principles, no less than to the affections, of a child! If any father or mother,—in want of pecuniary aid,—and especially “if any *widow*—have children, let them first learn to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God.—But if any provide not for his own (destitute relatives,) and especially for those of his own family, (among whom his parents have the strongest claim,) he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”

Is there any reason to fear, that a father or a mother is destitute of real religion? Oh, what

a difficult, what a delicate, yet what a sacred duty devolves upon a child! No duty can be more imperative; no duty can less allow of procrastination; in no instance can the successful discharge of duty be more blissful! Whilst there is perpetually the diffusion of joy among the inhabitants of heaven, over children brought to repentance by the instrumentality of parents; there is sometimes a rejoicing over parents, brought to repentance, through the instrumentality of their own children. If that joy must be more than usually intense in the minds of benignant angels; what must be its intensity of rapture in the hearts of those children, and in the hearts of those parents!

Such being the duties, of principal importance, which children owe to their parents, we proceed to consider,

SECONDLY, The Motives by which Children should be induced to discharge these filial duties with delight.

Let it be then observed,

*First*, That ~~thus~~ to act, is in itself unquestionably right, and in a high degree acceptable in the sight of God.

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Does not your own conscience, my young friends, tell you that it is right? Have not all nations in all ages, whatever diversities

of opinion might prevail on other points, agreed that this is right? Think of the sentiments of the ancient Romans, and of the ancient Spartans, and their full accordance on this subject, with those of the ancient and of the modern Chinese; and will it then be possible for you to allow *your* practical standard of moral feeling to fall below *theirs*? Think of the curses required by the Jewish lawgiver to be denounced on Mount Ebal. Of these one of the most awful and tremendous was to be thus expressed:—"Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother:" and all the people were required to say, Amen. Think of the importance attached to obedience by the fifth command of that law, which is holy in its character and unchanging in its obligation. Think, especially, of the motive urged in the text, that it is right, and, as expressed in the Epistle to the Colossians, that it is "well-pleasing unto the Lord." If the heart be right with God, surely this motive will exert a most constraining power. Say then:—"Is it well-pleasing unto thee, O my God? To know this is enough. Thy claims on my heart, and on my life, transcend all my power of expression. Thou hast made me, and sustained me, and given me all things richly to enjoy. Thou hast sent into the world in which I dwell, thy beloved Son, to be its Prince and its Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins.

Every hope of forgiveness for the past, as well as every hope of blessedness for the future, lays me under the strongest obligation, to do that which is well-pleasing in thy sight. My heart beats high with gratitude at the thought, that the act of obedience to my beloved parents, under the influence of filial love, should, by thy condescending goodness, be regarded as an act of homage to thyself, and should be accepted as well-pleasing to thee my God."

*Secondly*, Obedience to this divine precept imparts inexpressible delight to the hearts of Parents.

A wise and dutiful son, "maketh a glad father." Not only do his innumerable assiduities administer to the external comfort of his parents, but his conduct is felt to be a welcome tribute of honour, speaking loudly and eloquently in their praise. It is presumed that parents have been kind, when children are evidently grateful; and that there has been no failure in parental duty, when there is no deficiency in filial respect. The affectionate and dutiful attentions of children, when united with indications of the fear and love of God, constitute the most gratifying remuneration, and the most exquisite enjoyment which parents can possibly receive. It is in the contemplation of these developments of character, that they feel assured they have not lived in vain; and if

they themselves enjoy a good hope through grace, they are almost ready to say ;—" Now Lord, lettest thou thy servants depart in peace." You cannot adequately conceive, my dear young friends, of the exquisite delight thus infused into the hearts of christian parents : and is not this a motive of surpassing power—of force which you find it impossible to resist ?

*Thirdly*, Filial love and obedience are connected with a most abundant reward.

To a well-constituted mind, indeed, no reward can be required as a motive, beyond that to which I have already directed your views ; but He who delights in bestowing mercies, which far transcend all the expectations of his creatures, has been pleased to superadd another motive, arising out of the promise of temporal prosperity. The language of the fifth commandment is :—" Honour thy father and thy mother ; that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Now we might have supposed, that the promise thus appended to the precept, was designed to apply only to the ancient Israelites, who were then on their march towards that land which was to be the scene of unrivalled prosperity. But mark the language of the inspired Apostle :—" Honour thy father and mother ; which is the first commandment with promise ; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest live

long on the earth." Now even admitting, that the character of the former dispensation gave ampler scope, for the literal fulfilment of this promise, in the grant of a prosperous longevity; yet must it not, on the other hand, be conceded, that the citation of this promise, as a motive to filial obedience, must have proceeded on a persuasion in the mind of the Apostle, that some degree of temporal prosperity was still designed to be attendant on the discharge of filial duty? I cannot, therefore, but think, with many judicious interpreters of scripture, that a promise of temporal blessings is, even under our own dispensation, attached to the exemplary discharge of filial obligations. Even if length of days be not given, "it is well with them" who honour their parents, from a desire to honour God. It may be confidently asserted, that the early habits of subordination, obedience, diligence, and temperance, called forth in the discharge of filial duty, must have a beneficial aspect on the circumstances and pursuits of subsequent life; and a direct adaptation to promote health and longevity. It may be affirmed, with equal confidence, that a good son bids fair to become a good husband, a good father, and a good master; and, therefore, that in all these capacities and relations, he has encouragement to anticipate the blessing of a bounteous providence. But this, although true,

does not appear to be the whole of the truth, or to do full justice to the tenour of the promise. "In conversing," says Dr. Dwight, "with plain people, distinguished for their good sense, and careful observation of facts, I have found them, to a great extent, firmly persuaded of the verification of this promise in our own days; and ready to produce a variety of proofs from cases, in which they have seen the blessing realized. Their opinion on this subject is mine, and with their experience my own has coincided.—I do not say that miracles are wrought for the reward of filial piety. Neither will I say that purer gales breathe, to preserve its health; nor that softer suns arise, or more timely rains descend, to mature its harvests; nor that more propitious winds blow, to waft its ships home in safety. But I will say, that on the tide of providence, multiplied blessings are borne into its possession, at seasons when they are unexpected, in ways unforeseen, and by means unprovided by its own forecast, which are often of high importance, which altogether constitute a rich proportion of prosperity; and which, usually, are not found by persons of the contrary character."

*Fourthly*, Let it be remembered, that filial attentions are most beautifully illustrated, and most powerfully enforced, by the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is recorded of his early childhood, that "he

waxed strong in spirit, being filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was upon him." At the age of twelve years, such was the display of his wisdom and knowledge, in the presence of the doctors of the law, that "all who heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers;" yet did he willingly return with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, "and was subject unto them." Their pleasure was the law of his youth, and the joy of his heart. With them and for them it is probable that his hands laboured, till he entered on the nobler fatigues of his public ministry. And when that glorious, though suffering, career was closing with his life, his last solicitude regarded his much-loved mother; and from the cross on which he was dying in agonies of pain, he said to the beloved disciple,—“Behold thy Mother!” We wonder not, that “from that hour, that disciple took her unto his own home!” Say, my dear young friends, has not that example all the force, —yes, and more than the force of the most imperative precept? Will you not evince, by your imitation, its irresistible power?

And have not we a personal concern in those agonies, under which the Saviour was labouring, when there proceeded from his lips, the expression of his filial love? What was it which rendered necessary the sufferings of his cross? Was it not sin—sin such as we ourselves have been perpetually



committing, from the days of our early childhood ; —sin against a Father, whose claims on our love and obedience are still stronger, incomparably stronger, than those of any earthly parent ? “ A son,” saith Jehovah, “ honoureth his father, and a servant his master : if then I be a father, where is mine honour, and if I be a master, where is my fear ? ” Have we not withheld from Him who made us, the homage and the affection due to his name, and the obedience required by his law ? Have we not exposed ourselves to the deserved and tremendous penalties of that law, which denounces a soul-destroying curse on the transgressor ? If your consciences are alive to a sense of culpable failure, in the duties owing to your parents, are they not, or at least ought they not to be, still more alive to a sense of the more numerous, and aggravated, and alarming instances of failure, as it regards the all-knowing and almighty God ? Oh, how joyous, then, and how precious to your hearts, should be the announcement of a Saviour, whose blood cleanseth from all sins ; and who “ was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” Believe then on his name, that “ being justified by faith, you may have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Nor let it be forgotten, that it is only the believer in Jesus, who, being reconciled to God,

and accepted in the beloved, is qualified to perform either filial duties, or duties of any other class, in a way truly acceptable to the Lord. The children addressed in the text are supposed to cherish supreme regard to the authority and the claims of God. "Children," says the Apostle, "obey your parents, in the Lord;" that is, I conceive, from the impulse of love to his name, and gratitude for his mercies, and reverence for his authority. Obedience, then, to parents must be essentially defective, in the sight of God, if not animated and guided by these high and holy principles. How indispensable then is that influence from above, which renews, and elevates, and purifies the heart. With what earnestness of desire, and importunity of prayer should you seek the aid of the sanctifying Spirit. And will it be refused to the prayer of faith? Let the very confidence you have been accustomed to feel, in the kindness of earthly parents, awaken still greater confidence in the goodness and the faithfulness of God. "If ye being evil," said the Saviour, "know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"

## LECTURE XV.

### THE DUTIES OF MASTERS AND OF SERVANTS.

COL. III. 22. & IV. 1.

*Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.*

*Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal; knowing that ye also have a Muster in heaven.*

AN inequality of rank, of station, and of property, has more or less prevailed in every country and in every age; and were it possible for a system to be introduced into any community, which would, in the first instance, level all distinctions, that equality could not be maintained one single day; unless, by an unprecedented and inconceivable miracle, the whole population should lose all diversity of character, and become absolutely equalized in talent, in disposition, and in all their habits of mind and of conduct. But never was it the design of providence, never was it the design of christianity, to render equal the intel-

lectual endowments, or the external circumstances of mankind. Rightly viewed, the diversity itself will not appear to be an evil. It is unquestionably compatible with a high degree, if not even with an equal degree of happiness, throughout the various gradations of a well-ordered community. The several ranks and orders of society render to each other most welcome and most useful aid. The poor are not more dependent on the rich, than, in another sense, the rich are dependent on the poor. If the poor are indebted to the rich, the rich are no less indebted to the poor. By the interchange of valuable assistance, and the sense of reciprocal benefits, there is also effected a moral discipline, highly conducive to the future, as well as to the present interests of both. Under this impression, I now invite both masters and servants to a consideration of the *duties*, arising out of their respective circumstances in life; and of the *principles*, on which those duties should be performed. Following the order observed by the Apostle, in the injunctions which have been read, let me first address myself to SERVANTS. Let me endeavour to point out,—

FIRST, The *Duties* devolving on servants.

*First*, There is the duty of strict and unbending fidelity.

“It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful;” and, in a greater or less degree,

every servant is a steward of the *property* entrusted to his or her care. Even in domestic economy, much is often confided to the use and management of servants; and it is nothing less than a breach of trust, as well as a violation of honesty, either to appropriate to their own use, that to which they have no right; or to consume, by wasteful extravagance, the property of their employers. "Exhort servants," said the Apostle Paul to Titus, "to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; *not purloining*, but shewing all good fidelity." The species of dishonesty here forbidden, but which, it is to be feared, is carried on to a most lamentable extent, is the taking of little things, on a small scale, but by a frequent repetition of acts. "There is a very simple rule by which to determine whether there be any violation of this precept. Whatever a servant would openly take, under the eye of a master or mistress, cannot be considered as purloining. But if something be taken by stealth, which he would not wish to be seen using, this is a breach of the injunction, and is clearly contrary to the will of God."

Fidelity has also regard to the diligent employment of *time*. On entering into domestic, or into commercial employment, the servant voluntarily surrenders either the whole, or a certain proportion of his time, in consideration of a

stipulated recompense. To squander away that time, therefore, by idleness, or to devote those hours to his own purposes, which, by an explicit or implied contract, had ceased to be at his own disposal, must be an act of palpable injustice and absolute dishonesty.

Fidelity, on the part of female domestics, frequently involves also, in a pre-eminent degree, *the vigilant care of children.* A more sacred charge than that of children, in the early stages of existence, can scarcely devolve upon a human being. Their life, their limbs, their constitution, their health, their opening and impressible minds, are more or less confided to the care of servants. How great a treasure to a family is the servant whose conscientious assiduity, prudent foresight, tender feelings, and gentle manners are such as to authorize, at all hours and under all circumstances, that confidence! "There was a description of persons known in a former age; (observes the judicious author of '*Domestic Religion*,'\*) but which, it is to be regretted, are seldom now to be met with,—old and confidential servants in a house, who were considered, from their long and faithful services, as almost as fixed and regular parts of the family, as any of its other members. Their interests became, as it were,

\* The Rev. W. Innes.

identified with those of their master and mistress, and the children they almost considered as their own. They were known and recognized by all the connexions of the family, and even by those who were accustomed to visit in it, and were usually made the subject of the same kind inquiries with the other members of the household. Finer examples of disinterested benevolence, and respectability of character in humble life, are seldom to be seen than such as we have sometimes met with in servants of this description."

*Secondly*, There is due from servants cheerful obedience to all lawful and reasonable commands.

In the enforcement of this duty, the Apostle employs language the most explicit and decided:—"Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh." Now in order to this there must be a constant endeavour to understand, to remember, and to act upon, the directions which are given, especially when inattention and forgetfulness would be the occasion of serious inconvenience. The energy of the mind, as well as the labour of the hands, must be given to the duties of the station which is occupied, or there will be perpetual and culpable instances of failure. There ought to be a studious desire to satisfy every reasonable expectation, as well as every positive claim. "Exhort servants," said the Apostle, "to be obedient unto their own masters, and to *please*

*them well* in all things.”—“ With good will doing service.”—“ And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily.” Something more then is required than the simple performance of the work prescribed. The divine requirement extends to the spirit and temper of the mind, no less than to the external act of obedience. To be sullen, or morose, or petulant, or obstinate, or unwilling to yield compliance, must be not only offensive to employers, but also highly displeasing in the sight of God. It is, in short, a species of disobedience to the divine will, which, as expressed in these apostolical injunctions, requires the very opposite dispositions of mind to be in constant exercise.

*Thirdly*, The law of Christ requires, on the part of servants, meekness and gentleness of demeanour, even in receiving reproof.

“ Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters—*not answering again.*” We are not to suppose that the Apostle here forbids servants to offer an explanation of their conduct, when they may conceive themselves to be labouring under an unjust imputation; but he certainly forbids the use of all language, which would be wanting in christian meekness, or respectful deference. Should the reproof administered, on any occasion, be thought unduly severe, still there should not be indulged the spirit of proud and angry and indignant resentment. The very reverse of all



this is required. Hear the injunction of the Apostle Peter:—"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle; but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps." The language of these verses, it is evident, is not literally applicable to the state of servitude among ourselves, but to the degraded state of domestic slavery, which prevailed among those who are addressed by the Apostles. Well may we rejoice, with gratitude to God, that slavery exists not in our happy land: and ardently should we desire and pray, that soon the time may arrive, in which its last vestiges may disappear from the face of the whole earth. But if in the cheerless and pitiable situation of a slave, there is required, by apostolic authority, so much of christian patience and submission, how much more should there be displayed the meekness which "answereth not again," when there is so much less to endure.

*Fourthly*, Let there be uniform adherence to Truth.

Falsehood is a breach of trust ; it is a violation of the confidence reposed in the veracity of the assertor. While, therefore, on the part of any one, in any situation of life, it is a flagrant and disgraceful offence, it assumes a character of peculiar turpitude and aggravation, when resorted to by a servant, for the purpose of deceiving a master or a mistress. It is usually designed to cover some fault, and it is a most awful addition to the guilt contracted. It is offensive in the sight of God, and detestable in the estimation of men. It undermines all confidence, and it forfeits all right to be believed. And yet to how alarming an extent does the vice of lying prevail among all classes of society: might I not add, especially among domestic servants! Let me then beseech those of you, whom providence has placed in this useful and responsible situation, if you value your character, if you desire the respect and attachment of your superiors, if you regard the voice of conscience, if you dread the frown and curse of the Almighty,—never, even in one single instance, to the very end of your days, to be guilty of a falsehood, or to carry on any scheme of deception. Among the seven things which the wise man specifies, as, in the strongest sense, an abomination to God, are these,—“ A proud look, a lying tongue, a heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, and a false witness that speaketh lies.”

Having then glanced at the duties of primary importance which devolve on servants, let your attention be directed,

SECONDLY, To the Principles on which these Duties should be performed.

*First*, Let them be discharged, from a regard to the inspection of the all-seeing and ever present God.

The requirement of our text is, that servants should obey their masters, "not with eye-service as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God." Oh, how much wisdom and how much importance is there in such an injunction as this. How different would be the state of society, if the noble principle here enforced were universally operative. What a reduction might be made in the various establishments of trade and commerce, and government, if the system of inspection and superintendence had ceased to become necessary, by the general prevalence of those realizing views of the inspection of Deity, which Hagar expressed when she said, — "Thou, God, seest me!" But, alas! how few there are, in any situation in life, who conscientiously persevere in the discharge of duty, "as seeing Him who is invisible." Are there no servants whose behaviour, under the eye of a master or a mistress, is the very reverse of the habits which they indulge, when that eye is withdrawn? Is not that "eye-service," which depends

for its completeness or its despatch, on the actual, or the expected, presence of an employer? Oh, how much to be valued are those servants,—and such there are—who require not that incentive; but who perform the business of every day, “not with eye-service, as men-pleasers merely, but in that singleness of heart,” which is opposed to all duplicity and insincerity and guile. Happy are they, and worthy of equal confidence and esteem, who can say with the holy Apostle:—“Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.”

*Secondly,* Let there be a desire, while serving man, to serve and please the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Whatsoever ye do,” said the Apostle, “do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men:—for ye serve the Lord Christ.” It is possible, then, to be good servants, in the estimation of your fellow-creatures, and yet not to be good servants in the estimation of Him who searcheth the heart. A servant may display many properties, highly conducive to the interests and to the satisfaction of his employer; and yet his heart may not be right in the sight of God. The common duties of life cannot be performed, in a way acceptable to Him with whom we have to do, except by one who is reconciled to God by faith in the great Mediator,

and has become, from a principle of love, the devoted servant of Christ. Such were they whom the Apostle addressed in the text. They were believers in Jesus. They had been born again, and renewed in the spirit of their minds. They had surrendered their hearts to Christ; and their supreme desire was, that, in every action of life and in every duty of their humble station, they might please and glorify their Lord. Does *your* character resemble theirs? Is such the motive under which you act? Have you devoted yourselves to the service of Christ, and, looking for redemption through his blood, are you daily imploring the promised supply of his Spirit, "to work in you to will and to do, according to his good pleasure?"

*Thirdly*, Let there be a desire to adorn and to recommend, by your conduct, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The grand motive by which the Apostle endeavoured to induce christian servants to be exemplary in the discharge of their incumbent duties was—"that they might adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Is it not highly gratifying to the heart of a pious servant, to be assured, that this is practicable; and that the retired and subordinate character of their station in society, by no means disqualifies them for aiming with success, at the highest and noblest end to which human life

can be devoted? Suppose a female servant, animated by this motive, to be situated in a *religious* family. She is aware, that more is expected from her, than from others, on account of her religious profession. She is anxious to justify and to fulfil that expectation. Depending on the aid of power from above, which she diligently seeks, she endeavours to be conscientious, trustworthy, industrious, gentle, and obliging. Thus does she “adorn the doctrine” which she professes to believe. She knows that there is intrinsic excellence of the highest character, in the doctrine of the Saviour, whether it be discerned or overlooked; and she endeavours to bring it out to view in its loveliness and glory, by exhibiting in her temper and deportment the beauties of holiness. It is her desire and prayer, that the light of her unaffected piety may so shine before the members of the family in which she resides, that they, seeing her good works, may glorify her Father in heaven. Were this to be more frequently the character of those who make a profession of religion, how effectually would it remove the prejudice, which most lamentably exists, even in many pious families, against religious servants. It is alleged, that too many of them appear to value themselves on their imagined superiority of character, to lay claim to an extent of religious privilege incompatible with the convenience of a family, to indulge to an

unreasonable excess their love of acquaintance, to sit in judgment, with an unchristian spirit, on the domestic arrangements of their superiors, and to forget that a participation of spiritual blessings and even of equality in the Church of Christ, is by no means intended to elevate them above that station, in which they are placed by the allotments of divine providence. Let those servants who are in any danger of incurring such charges as these, to the dishonour of their religious profession, keep in mind the requirements of the Apostle Paul :—" Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters (with whom they may be associated in christian fellowship) worthy of all honour, that the name of Christ, and his doctrine, be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, (or behave with less respectful deference) because they are brethren; but rather do them service (with the greater assiduity and attachment), because they are faithful and beloved partakers of the benefit."

But let us suppose a servant professing religion, to be situated in an *irreligious* family. How much may depend on her spirit and deportment. Either she will adorn and recommend the gospel, or she will cause its enemies to speak reproachfully. Either she will induce those around her to think more favourably of the

religion she professes to have embraced, or she will strengthen their prejudices against it. Upon her, although a humble individual, it depends, under God, either to diminish or to increase the obstacles which stand in the way of their conversion and salvation. If, in any instances, her conduct agree not with her profession; if she appear negligent, or indolent, or irritable, or disrespectful, or indifferent to the comfort of the family, the conclusion drawn from her deportment will inevitably be, either that she is destitute of real religion, or that religion exists but in name. If, on the contrary, her temper and conduct adorn the doctrine of the Saviour in all things, who can estimate the extent of beneficial consequences which may be eventually the result?

“As an encouragement to christians placed in this situation,” says Mr. Innes\*, “I will mention a very pleasing instance of a signal blessing accompanying the consistent conduct of a maid-servant, who was placed in a family, the members of which were strangers to the influence of true religion. Several young ladies were the objects of her charge. Frequently in the evening she proposed to read to them, when they were retiring to rest, a portion of the word of God; and though they had no taste for such an employment,

\* See his work before alluded to, on Domestic Religion.



yet, as she was a great favourite with the family, on account of her uniformly amiable temper, and accommodating manners, they were willing to listen to her. For a long time they heard what she read with much indifference. At length, however, she was taken ill and died in the family, eminently supported by the faith of the gospel, and animated by the hope of eternal life. The wonderful consolation she experienced on her death-bed, recalled to the recollection of the young ladies, the truths she used to read to them from the word of God. They then began to see the vast importance of these truths; and from one step to another, the greater part of a family, formerly gay and thoughtless, embraced the gospel, and were eminently distinguished for living under its influence. Let none, then, imagine that their situation is so obscure as to exclude them from usefulness, even of the most important and exalted kind. Let us bear in mind, that those who honour God, he will honour."

A *fourth* motive still remains to be considered; and it is—a regard to the decision and the recompense of the last great day.

"Servants," said the Apostle, "obey your masters in all things—fearing God;—Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ.

But he that doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done ; and there is no respect of persons.—Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.” The hope of acceptance and salvation must be founded exclusively on the obedience and atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but the evidence of being disciples and servants of Christ, and true believers in his name, is to be derived from the conduct of life, in the station in which providence may have placed us. To that course of conduct will the appeal be made at the decisive day, as the justification of the sentence which will go forth from the judgment-seat ; and a correspondence at once impartial and most gracious, will be seen between the service of Christ on earth, and the enjoyment of his glory in heaven. Be it remembered, then, that the humblest station prevents not the dignity of well-doing now, nor the dignity of highest distinction at the day of future recompense. Let the hope of the divine approbation at that day excite to every action ornamental to the christian character ; and let the principle also of salutary fear restrain from the indulgence of evil. “ Fear God, and keep his commandments ; for this is the whole duty (and should be the grand concern) of man : for God shall

bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

When duties are correlative and reciprocal, there is a great advantage in contemplating them in immediate connexion with each other. Although, therefore, the limits of one discourse may not be favourable to extended discussion, yet do I regard it as desirable, before I relieve your attention, to bring before your view a scriptural outline of the *Duties* devolving upon Masters, and the *Principles* on which they should be performed. Contemplate,

First, The *Duties* of christian Masters.

If on this part of our subject we study greater brevity and compression than on the former, we follow, in this respect, the example of the inspired Apostle, who deemed it unnecessary to enter into minute detail; being aware that many of the same rules and obligations which had been enforced on the attention of servants, are applicable also to masters. His injunction to them is, therefore, in these few but comprehensive and emphatic words: "And ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening; knowing that your master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him." Still more concise is the precept in our text:—"Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and

equal; knowing that ye also have a Master in heaven." In these authoritative commands there is required,—

*First*, A just and adequate remuneration of services.

There should be no endeavour or disposition to reduce, to the very lowest point, the wages of a servant, whether engaged for domestic avocations or for any of the higher departments of agency, required in the conduct of trade and commerce. It should be remembered, that if the difference in point of amount between one rate of recompense and another, be of importance to the master, it is generally of much more importance to the servant; inasmuch as the resources of the servant may be presumed to be very limited, when compared with those of the master. When stipulations, as to amount and as to payment, have been mutually adjusted, let masters remember the duty and the importance of rendering that payment honourably punctual. It is the cruelty of injustice to expose to hazard, by unwarrantable speculations, either the wages which have never yet been paid, or the well-earned property of dependents confided to the custody of employers. Nor less to be detested are the practices of those, whose profits in trade arise, in no small degree, from reducing the price of labour below its approved and acknowledged standard. It would

be well if those manufacturers and agriculturists, whose gains arise from sources such as these, would consider how nearly they approximate to the conduct of the offenders thus addressed by the Apostle James:—“Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you.—Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back—crieth: and the cries of them who have reaped, are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.”

*Secondly*, There should be, on the part of all who are heads of families, or of still more extensive establishments, a due regard to the health and comfort of servants.

Undue and excessive labour ought not to be exacted. By habitual diligence, it should be ordinarily practicable, to secure some degree of leisure for personal convenience and enjoyment; as well as an adequate proportion of hours for repose after the labours of the day. Every possible precaution should be adopted, to prevent the unnecessary exposure of health and of life, especially in employments which have any tendency to injure the constitution, or to occasion peculiar hazard. The greatest kindness of sympathy and of attention should be cheerfully displayed, when servants of any order, and more particularly when

domestic servants, are labouring under pain and illness; nor should a cold and calculating parsimony obstruct or delay a recourse to the remedies required.

*Thirdly*, Let there be a prevailing solicitude for the religious interests of the servants employed.

If, as is often discovered, they appear ignorant of the gospel of Christ, and unacquainted with the contents of the bible, it becomes a most sacred and imperious duty, on the part of the master and the mistress, to promote their religious instruction, and to direct their regard to the things which belong to their peace. Their best interests should be kept in view in the daily worship of the family;—and can that be regarded as a religious family, in which the children and servants are not daily assembled to hear the reading of the word of God, and to present their common supplications at the throne of grace? Can the fear or the love of God be supposed to dwell in the hearts of those who are at the head of a family, in which domestic devotion is neglected? More especially on the Lord's-day, should the religious interests of servants, as well as of children, be particularly kept in view, and promoted by the best methods which wisdom can devise and which kindness can carry into effect. Above all, every facility should be afforded on that day, for their attendance at

the house of God; and such arrangements should be made, in every part of the domestic economy, as that no avoidable hindrances should arise from festivity or from company, to prevent a regular enjoyment of the benefits of public instruction.

It remains for us now to advert,

SECONDLY, To the Principles on which these Duties should be performed.

The *first* is a regard to the relation in which Masters themselves stand towards God, and to the principle on which he requires service to be rendered to himself.

“Ye also,” said the Apostle, “have a Master in heaven.” What, then, is the principle on which he requires us to render obedience to his will, and without which no obedience can be acceptable? Is it a principle of servile dread? “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”—“We love him because he first loved us.”—“If ye love me,” said the Saviour, “keep my commandments.” Is not this, then, the model for our imitation? Ought we not to endeavour to rule our households, by inspiring attachment, and esteem, and respect? Ought it not to be our desire, that our servants, and especially if they be christian servants, should obey from the impulse of principles such as these? Will not this desire, then, restrain from all undue severity

both of requirement, and of reprehension? Will it not preserve us from an unreasonable demand of perfection in their services, as also from sinful and injurious irritation, on the discovery of occasional instances of thoughtlessness and negligence, and inattention to the orders they had received?

The *second* principle, which alone remains to be noticed, is—a consideration of accountableness at the divine tribunal.

“Your master also is in heaven, neither is there respect of persons with him.”

Before his bar the master and the servant must alike appear, to give an account of the things done in the body, “whether they be good or whether they be evil.” No partiality will be shown in favour of the master to the prejudice of the servant, or in favour of the servant to the prejudice of the master. All the multiform distinctions and gradations of rank shall finally cease at death, to be no more recognized at all, except for the purpose of a righteous retribution. The question which alone will be found important, when we enter the unseen world, to which we are rapidly hastening, will not be—what rank or station did we occupy among the short-lived inhabitants of the earth, but—in what manner, and with what spirit, and under what motives, did we conduct ourselves in the stations assigned us by God?

Are we, then, whether masters or servants,



prepared to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ? Have we humbled ourselves under a sense of our numberless defects and transgressions, both as it regards our fellow-creatures, and our adorable and omniscient Creator? Have we received, by faith, those glad tidings which proclaim a free and a full forgiveness, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus? Are our hearts renewed by the omnipotence of regenerating grace? Are we "girding up the loins of our minds," for the vigorous discharge of every incumbent duty? Are we in the attitude of servants fully prepared for the arrival of their Lord? "Be ye ready," said the Saviour; "for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of Man cometh."

## LECTURE XVI.

THE DUTIES WE OWE TO OUR CHRISTIAN BRETHREN.

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JOHN XIII. 34, 35.

*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another ; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

OFTEN were words of kindest love combined with words of loftiest dignity, in the discourses of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but never were expressions of exquisite tenderness more admirably blended with the true sublime, than on the occasion to which this chapter refers. The memorable Supper was ended. The traitor had quitted the table, in order to arrange the infernal plot. It was then, that not with a trembling, but an exulting heart, the Saviour exclaimed—" Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. If God be glorified in him, God shall also glorify him in himself, and shall straightway glorify him " Is

not this sublime? Now mark the pathetic tenderness of the utterance of his heart of love:—  
 “ Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me; and, as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go ye cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”

This communication of the Saviour’s will puts into our hands the key of knowledge; by which we may ascertain the duties we owe to our christian brethren.

Let your attention, then, be directed—

To the principle out of which all these duties take their rise:

To the duties, arising out of this principle, which we owe to our brethren with whom we are united in church communion: and—

To the duties which we owe to our fellow-christians at large.

FIRST, Let us consider the principle which the Saviour inculcates.

It is love—the love of the brethren. “ A new commandment I give unto you—that ye love one another.” But in what sense could this be pronounced a *new* command? Was it not as old as the ancient law, which, according to our Saviour’s own interpretation, requires us to love our neighbour as ourselves? Was not the precept

now given the same, in substance, with that which was given at Sinai, and originally written on the heart? To obviate the difficulty, it has been usually said, that although it is substantially the same, it is delivered by the Saviour with new force, with additional clearness, and with more powerful motives. This explanation never appeared to me satisfactory—never appeared to me to justify the mode of expression adopted by the Lord Jesus, or to amount to the import of his words. I should expect to find a meaning more plain, obvious, and direct. Nor do I think it difficult to arrive at such a sense. The old commandment requires us to love our *neighbour*, that is, our fellow-man, —every member of the human family, without any exception arising from country, or tribe, or even of character, or of religion. The love it requires is that of the most diffusive and unbounded benevolence;—it is in the full and unrestricted import of the term — *philanthropy* — the love of man, simply as man, irrespective of all the circumstances which distinguish man from man. That old command our divine legislator never designed to repeal; on the contrary, he most strongly enforced its obligation. But to this he has superadded another and a new command; it is a precept given to his own *disciples*, to love *one another*, on the ground of being his disciples, from a principle of attachment

to himself. Whilst the old commandment still requires the exercise of benevolence, on the broadest scale, this new command requires the exercise of an affection of a still more ardent and powerful character than simple benevolence. It requires an affection, growing out of a relation, in which christians do not stand towards any, except those who are the true disciples of Christ. It requires an affection for the sake of the truth which is in them, and for the sake of the image of Christ which is seen in their character. It requires an intensity of affection, making some approach to the fervour of the love of our Lord and Saviour himself. It requires an affection so strong and so steady in its exercise, as to become not only a bond of union among christians themselves, but also a visible and obvious badge of distinction, which may strike the attention of the world at large. No mark of so distinguishing a character could there be, in the exercise of that love which is to go forth to all mankind; but of the love required by the new command, the language of the Saviour is;—"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

The difference between the love required in the old command, and the love required in the new, appears to be recognized by the Apostle Peter, when, in the commencement of his second Epistle, he requires christians to add "to godli-

ness, brotherly-kindness, or the love of the brethren, as enjoined in the new command; and then to add to the love of the brethren, charity, or rather love; that is, benevolence unrestricted,—the universal philanthropy originally required. The distinction appears to be still more plainly recognized by the Apostle John, in his first Epistle, when he says, in the inculcation of christian love; “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you.” The Saviour’s command in the text, to which he appears to refer, may be considered as an old command, inasmuch as it requires the exercise of the same disposition of mind, as the original command, although in a much higher degree of excitement: it may be more correctly considered as new, inasmuch as it respects a different class of objects.

And is it not reasonable, is it not natural, that the disciples of Jesus should cherish towards each other some degree of that love which he himself cherishes towards them all? Is it reasonable, is it possible, that they should be destitute of love—of love peculiar and characteristic—towards those for whom the Saviour displayed a love stronger than death? Does he not recognize them as brethren? Does he not destine them to mansions of eternal blessedness in his Father’s

house? Are they not attached to his person, to his doctrine, to his precepts, to his service, to his institutions, and to all the interests of his spiritual kingdom? Do they not bear some incipient resemblance to him in the prominent features of their character, and is it not their earnest desire to be progressively and entirely conformed to his moral image, that they may be prepared for the presence of his glory? Now are not all these considerations incentives to mutual love, and bonds of brotherly attachment? Are they not points of attraction which none can resist; are they not principles of union to which all must yield; are they not elements of character, at once inspiring love in the hearts of their fellow-Christians, and awakening in their own a susceptibility of reciprocal affection?

Such, then, being the grand principle of union among the disciples of the Redeemer, let our attention be directed—

SECONDLY, To the Duties, arising out of this Principle, which we owe to those of our brethren, with whom we are united in church communion.

It appears natural for one, in whose heart there dwells the principle of love to Christ, and love to his disciples, to reason thus:—"If the providence of God fix the bounds of my habitation in a place where there is a Christian church, scripturally constituted, and where the word and

ordinances are administered in an edifying manner, it is incumbent on me to associate myself with that society, not only that I may enjoy christian privileges, but also that I may place myself in a proper sphere, for the discharge of christian duties. It is not only my duty to confess Christ before men, by publicly associating with his avowed followers, and by commemorating, in the appointed ordinance, his dying love; but it is also my duty, to display towards my christian brethren that love, which, by its appropriate exercise, and its many practical manifestations, may fulfil my Saviour's "new commandment." Now I cannot be fully qualified even for attempting this obedience; I cannot be placed in circumstances in which, according to the spirit and full extent of Christ's injunction, this obedience becomes practicable, unless I associate myself intimately with his disciples, and enter into full communion with them in the fellowship of the gospel." It would be well, if considerations such as these, had their full weight on the minds of those who habitually neglect the observance of the Lord's Supper, and who stand aloof from the communion of a christian church. But I must now address myself to such as have entered on that communion, and are anxiously desirous to act according to the tenor of the Saviour's new command,—That we love one another, even



as he has loved us; that all men may know that we are his disciples. Suffer then the word of pastoral exhortation. Let me beseech you, my dear brethren,—

*First*, To cultivate the feeling of brotherly relationship towards the individual members of the church, with which you unite in christian fellowship.

If nothing is to be esteemed foreign, which has relation to a fellow-creature of our own species, however remote from us;—if, because he is a man, he is, in one sense, a brother, nothing, surely, can be regarded as foreign, or uninteresting, or destitute of claim upon our feelings, which affects the interests of a brother, in church communion with ourselves. If we love not, with cordiality of regard, the brother “whom we *have* seen,” how shall we make it appear that we love our brethren “whom we have *not* seen?” If we have no true communion of spirit, with those with whom we associate as fellow-worshippers in the same sanctuary, what can we feel, what can we know of “the communion of saints,” on a more extended scale; or, in what sense can it be said, that we “are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem,—and to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven?”

*Secondly*, Forget not to offer earnest and habitual prayer, on behalf of the members of the religious society with which you are united; and especially on behalf of those who sustain office in the church.

Direct and personal intercourse we cannot, at all times, enjoy with each other; but supplications and intercessions we may daily present, at the throne of Him who heareth prayer. And do we not learn from the highest authority, that intercessory prayer is peculiarly acceptable in the sight of God, and powerfully available in obtaining a benediction from our Father in heaven? Was it not to petitions of this order, prompted by generous and disinterested love, that the Apostle James particularly referred, when he asserted, that "the effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much?" In answer to the prayer of Elijah, "the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit," after a calamitous sterility of three years and six months. In answer to earnest supplication, during the continuance in the church of miraculous powers of healing, it was asserted by the same Apostle, that "the prayer of faith should save the sick, and the Lord would raise him up." Nor has the power of prayer ceased to prevail with God, although the age of miracles has long since passed away. Daily are there descending upon individuals,

upon families, upon churches, and upon nations; mercies of the highest value, in answer to the prayer of faith. Think, then, of the power of prayer, within the circle of one christian congregation! Hear the words of Him whose infinite merit and prevailing advocacy secure the grant of every requisite blessing:—"I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." What, then, must be the power of prayer, when among the assembled multitude in the house of God, there may be, not two or three individuals only, but as many scores, or even hundreds of petitioners, uniting in the prayer of faith? If, then, any individual member suffer, let the whole body sympathize; and, as the best expression of sympathetic feeling, let there be presented, at the throne of grace, the effectual fervour of united prayer. And is there an office-bearer in the church, or in any of the associations for doing good, which have arisen out of church communion, who does not need, or will not gratefully acknowledge, the benefit of united prayer? And what, let me ask, are, on this subject, the feelings of the christian pastor? Would he have any heart to undertake the arduous duties of his

office, or any power to struggle with its many difficulties, or any spirit to sustain the burden of its responsibility, or any encouragement to expect success in its discharge, were it not for the cheering persuasion, that there are ascending for his aid, the daily prayers of many who, like Jacob, have power with God ; and that, in return, there will be poured forth upon his mind and heart, the promised "unction of the Holy One, which teacheth all things," and "bringeth all things to remembrance;" and that the word of the ministry shall become "mighty through God," even through "the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ." Well you know, my beloved brethren, that the great Apostle himself earnestly desired, and affectionately intreated the prayers of the churches. Surely then you will not, you cannot, refuse daily compliance with this our most urgent request—"Brethren, pray for us." Pray, that by the communications of heavenly grace, we may "both save ourselves and them that hear us ; and that the word of the Lord may have free course among us, and be glorified."

*Thirdly*, Cherish the tenderest sympathy, and render the kindest aid, to those who are in affliction.

Are there not in the church to which you belong, the poor, and the sick, and the distressed ? Are there not some who are destitute of all friends

except within the bosom of the church, and who have no kind relatives at hand, to soothe their sorrows, or to administer the aid which they require? Are there not many who need the visits of sympathy, and some who need the visits of mercy? Even if they have learned in the school of their divine Master, "in whatsoever state they are, therewith to be content," would you not do well "to communicate to them in their affliction?" That Apostle who understood well the import of his Lord's new command, and who extends its requirement, even to a willingness "to lay down our lives for the brethren," has said,—“But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? “My little children,” he adds, “let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.” If any other considerations, besides those of duty and of delight, should be requisite to secure an imitation of the noble specimens of liberality, exhibited by the primitive christians towards their necessitous brethren, surely they will be found in that most touching disclosure, which proceeded from the lips of the Saviour himself, when anticipating the procedure he designs to adopt, on ascending the dread tribunal. To his believing and righteous followers, when placed at his right hand in glory, he will say, in adducing the evidence

of their attachment to himself:—"I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; sick, and ye visited me: for inasmuch as ye have done it to one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

*Fourthly*, Promote, by every possible method, the peace and harmony of the church.

"Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;—in honour preferring one another." Let no one be unduly tenacious of his own opinion or inclination, in arrangements to be decided by principles of expediency; but let there ever be a readiness to yield, where conscience presents no obstacle, to the general and prevailing desire. Let every one be determined, that never, by any unchristian temper, on his part, shall "any root of bitterness spring up," to the trouble or disquietude of the church. Let every one resolve, that never, on his part, shall offence be given by the want of christian courtesy. Let every one be determined, that he will never take offence, where no offence was designed; and that if, notwithstanding, the evil should, by any means, be incurred, he will resort to the earliest and kindest and wisest methods, of effecting a reconciliation. Let there be a spirit

of gentleness, forbearance, and forgiveness. "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you."

*Fifthly*, Endeavour, to your utmost, to maintain and to augment the true prosperity of the church.

The well-being of a religious society consists in the spiritual prosperity, the ornamental character, and the active usefulness of the individuals of whom it is composed. Its prosperity, therefore, is more or less dependent on the gifts and graces of every one of its members. Let every one, then, retain this conviction on his mind, and it will be impossible that he should feel indifference, on any points which may affect the attendance on the ordinances of public worship; the meetings of the church for prayer and for discipline, the efficiency of ministerial services, the additions to the number of church members, or the state of the charitable institutions within the sphere of the religious society. Of all scriptural plans of doing good which may be in operation, he will *desire* the prosperity, he will *implore* the prosperity; and he will, if opportunity be not wanting, actively *promote* the prosperity. He will look, not only on his own things, but also on the things of

others; desiring "that God, in all things, may be glorified."

It remains for me now to invite you to contemplate the operation of the principle of brotherly love, on a still nobler scale, and a far more extended range. Let me direct your regard,

THIRDLY, To the duties which we owe to our Christian Brethren at large.

Let it, first, be supposed, *that they belong to churches of the same sentiments, and the same order, as we ourselves.* In this case, inconsiderable indeed is the difference between them and us. It amounts to little more than this—that either from local convenience, or from relative connexion, or from individual preference, they meet for worship under another roof, and attend on the ministrations of another servant of Christ. If his order of talent, or his mode of conveying truth to the mind, or his plans of pastoral instruction, appear to the individual or to the family, more conducive to impression and to edification, by being more adapted to their own mental habits, they have, under these circumstances, an ample justification of their choice: but let them not forget, that other pastors, and other churches, especially in the same vicinity, have no small claim on their brotherly love, their kindest wishes, and their fervent prayers. Let no unhallowed spirit of rivalry, no depreciation of other



ministers, no mean and unworthy jealousies, no disposition unfriendly to confiding intercourse and christian communion, ever be permitted to infect their hearts. "Let brotherly love continue.—Let them stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the gospel;—provoking one another unto love, and to good works."

But in the supposition now made, we have not even approached the boundaries of the sphere, within the extensive range of which brotherly love delights to expand its susceptibilities, and to put forth its beneficial energies. Let us, therefore, now suppose, *that our christian brethren are united with churches of other denominations.*

I speak only, be it remembered, of those who are entitled to be regarded and recognized as *christian brethren*—as really believers in Jesus, in the scriptural sense of the expression, and as true and devoted disciples of the Redeemer. I cannot so regard, and dare not so recognize, those who, by their avowed sentiments, or by their inconsistent conduct, appear to be "the enemies of the cross of Christ." To the mere circumstance of their calling themselves christians, and claiming to be so acknowledged, there can be attached but little weight. Such individuals, and such societies, are indeed within the circumference of that all-comprehending circle, which is the sphere of

obedience to the old and ever-binding command—  
“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself:” but they are not included within the range of the new command,—to love, with a distinctive and peculiar affection, the disciples of Christ, as the appropriate badge of discipleship.

On the other hand all, without exception, who love and honour and obey our Lord Jesus Christ, are to be most cordially embraced and recognized as brethren. They may differ from us in opinion, as it regards minor and non-essential points of doctrine or of discipline; as it regards the mode, or even the subjects of baptism; as it regards the use or the rejection of a liturgy; and as it regards the government of a church, whether by bishops and subordinate dignitaries; or by presbyters, in synodical courts; or by settled pastors on the principles of congregational churches; or by travelling preachers, meeting in annual conference. But if we have reason to regard them, *in their individual capacity*, as members of the family of God, and of the household of faith, we should never feel the slightest hesitation, to regard and to recognize them as brethren, either in the welcome opportunities which may occur of social and friendly intercourse, or even in their occasional admission, if they so request, to the most solemn and interesting ordinance of christian communion, at the table of the Lord.

*First*, Let us ever cherish and express, towards all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, the most cordial affection.

When we designate a christian by a certain technical and sectarian denomination, we are too apt to think of him, and to speak of him, as we might be authorized to do, if the peculiarities of his party had formed his character, and regulated his prevailing disposition. Yet how little, if under the influence of christian candour, can we suppose this to be the case. How seldom, it is probable, is he even engaged in thinking at all, on the points of peculiarity; but how often is he employed in the contemplation of the great and glorious truths, on which his views and our own perfectly coincide. The currency of the denominational distinction is calculated to mislead us; and this is not one of the least of the evils, which have had their origin from sectarian names. Let us not, then, do injustice to our brother, but instead of being repelled, by the points of difference, let us yield ourselves to the attractive influence of the truth which dwelleth in *Him*, as well as in us, and "shall be with us for ever."

*Secondly*, Let us, with equal candour and satisfaction, acknowledge all the excellencies which we discern in christians of other communions, both as individuals and as collective bodies.

Lamentable must be the dominion of prejudices

over the mind of that man, who can discover nothing that is good in principle or in practice, which differs from the ideas or the usages of his own denomination. As far as my own observations have extended, I have seen reason to think, that many lessons of practical value may be derived from other societies of christians; while incalculable benefit may accrue to our own hearts, from cultivating friendly intercourse, as well as brotherly affection, beyond the pale of our own ecclesiastical inclosure. Among other beneficial effects of such an interchange of thought, and sentiment, and friendly offices, will be the counteraction of the tendency, betrayed by some of narrow mind, to treat with disrespect, and even with contemptuous levity, the religious forms and usages which differ from their own. If our brethren, of other denominations, be in all their peculiarities conscientious, we ought at least to be respectful. Nor should we ever permit ourselves to forget, how much we, as well as they, may have felt the almost imperceptible influence of early education, and accustomed habits.

*Thirdly*, Let us delight to co-operate, with our christian brethren at large, in general and important measures, for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

Who can estimate the amount of good, which has already resulted from such co-operation, in

societies for the circulation of the Scriptures at home and abroad, and for the spread of the everlasting gospel, by the agency of living teachers? Its glorious effects are already seen—are felt—even in the most distant regions of our globe; whilst at home, a new impulse has been thus given to the best emotions of the christian's heart, and the most powerful energies of his mind.

In conclusion, let me now, my dear friends, remind you, that whilst this love to the people of God is a badge of discipleship, by which others may form a judgment of our character, it is also a most valuable evidence of personal religion, to which our own minds may recur, with grateful delight, when summoned to enter on the momentous work of examining ourselves, "whether we be in the faith."—"We know," said the Apostle John, "that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death. Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love." Let us, then, bring ourselves to this decisive test. Have we this evidence of being born again—of being born of the Spirit, and being new creatures in Christ Jesus? Are we conscious, that irrespective of all other attractive considerations and engaging qualities, we love

every christian, simply because we believe him to be a christian; and are we conscious, that notwithstanding all unfavourable circumstances regarding intellectual character, or station in society, or even constitutional temper, we still love every christian, simply because we believe him to be a christian? If this be indeed the case, we have within ourselves one of the many evidences which we should wish to be able to trace to the full extent of all the various points of the christian character. May this be the object of our holy endeavour, as well as of our ardent desire; and may "the Spirit itself bear witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ;" to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be glory for ever, Amen.

## LECTURE XVII.

THE DUTIES WE OWE TO OUR FELLOW-MEN, BOTH  
AT HOME AND ABROAD.\*

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ROMANS I. 14.

*I am debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.*

THAT the Apostle considered himself a debtor to the Jews, still more than to the Greeks, or to the Barbarians, he deemed it unnecessary, on this occasion, to affirm. It was among the Jews at Damascus, that his apostolic energies were first developed; and when, with difficulty, he effected his escape from their murderous fury, he repaired to Jerusalem, in order to promote, among his brethren according to the flesh, the faith which he had before endeavoured to subvert. Throughout the entire extent of his missionary career, embracing a circuit from Jerusalem even to

\* This discourse was first delivered before the Home Missionary Society, at their last Anniversary, and was printed at their request. It is here reprinted with the omission of a few passages which belonged exclusively to that occasion.

Illyricum, it was his first object, to enter the synagogue, wherever a synagogue was to be found, that, by reasoning out of the scriptures which the Jews themselves acknowledged, he might establish in their hearts the conviction, that Jesus was the Christ. To Israelites by descent, the precedence is assigned by the Apostle, in immediate connexion with my text—"I am debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." By the Greek, in opposition to the Jew, is to be understood the Gentile, of whatever nation he might be, of whatever religion, of whatever order of intellectual character. This was the acceptance of the term most familiar to the mind of a Hebrew. But there was another acceptance of the term, more familiar to the minds of the Greeks themselves. To them, the term denoted—not the opposite to the word *Jew*, but the opposite to the word *Barbarian*; for the appellation *Barbarian*, they were accustomed to attach to all of every nation, who were not versed (as the well-educated among the Romans were) in their own refined and polished language. The declaration, then,



of the Apostle, is to this effect :—"I am a debtor, not to the Jews only, but also to the Gentiles; and not only to the Gentiles, who are distinguished by their learning, and their science, but to those also who are unlettered and untaught, of every country, and of every tribe, and of every tongue."

Do you, then, ask whence originated in his mind this holy and diffusive benevolence? The reply is, that motives, of most impulsive power, were acting with effect on his conscience and his heart. He felt the motive, arising from the force of *brotherhood*, binding him by the feelings of affectionate fraternity, not to the Jew only, but also to the Greek, and even to the Barbarian, of every colour, and of every caste; constraining him to love all men, and to honour all men, because "God hath made, of one blood, all that dwell on the face of the earth." He felt the motive, arising out of the *design and the efficacy of the great atoning sacrifice*, offered—not to expiate the sins of one nation only, but to take away the sin of the world; in order that the throne of God and of the Lamb, might be encircled by a rejoicing and an adoring multitude, which no man can number, of every kindred and tongue and people and nation. He felt the motive, arising out of the *authoritative commission* of the Saviour, when about to ascend to his glory :—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature."

He felt the motive, arising out of the *assurance* of Him who cannot lie, that He would “*pour out his Spirit upon all flesh*”; so that, wherever the gospel of Christ should be preached, the Spirit of Christ should operate, as the Spirit of light and life. Deep, therefore, and firm, was his persuasion, that in all the varieties of intellectual and moral culture, prevailing among men, there was nothing to deter—nothing to discourage an ambassador of Christ. Full well he knew, that without that Spirit, fruitless would be his mission, even to any of the descendants of Abraham; but, that with that Spirit, even among the most uncultivated, and the most unpromising barbarians, “he should gather fruit unto life eternal.” He was not, in any instance, ashamed of the gospel of Christ, because he knew it to be “the power of God, unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

... But still, perhaps, you ask the reason of that forcible peculiarity of representation, which gives a character to the text. You ask the origin, and the justification, of that feeling of actual debt—of absolute and positive obligation, of which the Apostle was conscious, and which goes so far beyond the feeling of mere benevolence;—that feeling of debt, to those whom he had never seen, whom he had never injured, and from whom he

had received no communication of good, to authorise a claim. The very possession of the heavenly treasure contained in the gospel of salvation, he viewed as constituting a debt, actually due from him, both to the Greek and to the Barbarian; which, therefore, it was his imperative duty, to the utmost possible extent, promptly to discharge. And is not this feeling, so intense, and so influential, to be traced to the sense of the debt which he owed to that divine and beloved Saviour, who had ransomed him from death eternal, by his own most precious blood; and thus constrained him, by all the excitements of grateful and adoring love, to live, not unto himself, but unto the glory of his redeeming and reigning Lord, to whom he owed his every joy, his every hope!

And how much, my christian brother, "owest thou unto thy Lord?" Died he not for thee—"the just for the unjust"—on the cursed tree? Rose he not again from the dead, for thy justification before the dread tribunal? Pleads he not for thee, the virtue of his blood, and the merit of his righteousness? Reigns he not for thee, over all creatures and all worlds? Owest thou not to his most gracious and compassionate interposition, the blotting out of thy numberless offences, and the cancelling of that fearful debt, the smallest part of which, throughout eternity, thou couldst never pay? Dost thou now stand

before thine omniscient God, acquitted and discharged? Has justice no demand; has the law no penalty; has the judgment-seat no terror; has death no sting; has the grave no gloom for thee? What, then, owest thou unto thy Lord? When, by that Holy Spirit who glorifies the Saviour, the love of Christ is copiously shed abroad in thine heart, and thou art feelingly alive to a sense of thy obligation to him who loved thee and gave himself for thee, then, art thou prepared to enter into the views, and to participate in the emotions of the Apostle, who felt constrained to say—"I am debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise?"

In accordance with the spirit of the text, it shall be my attempt to establish and illustrate three connected propositions.

The FIRST is,—that it is incumbent on us, to yield our minds and hearts to the full force of the claims, both of those who are more nearly, and of those who are more remotely related to us.

The SECOND is,—that a practical regard to the claims of the one class, is not to be postponed, till exertion and solicitude cease to be necessary, on behalf of the other class.

The THIRD is,—that by due attention to the claims of the one class, we, at the same time, promote the interests of the other class.

FIRST, *It is incumbent on us, to yield our minds and hearts to the full force of the claims, both of those who are more nearly, and of those who are more remotely related to us.*

It is to be feared, that in the minds of many who call themselves christians, the idea of debt, and of claim, and of obligation, is seldom, if ever, associated with the idea of benevolence. Deeming themselves the absolute proprietors, rather than the responsible stewards of that which is placed at their disposal; and forgetting the relation in which they stand, to the various branches of the human family, they imagine themselves at liberty, in every instance, either to give, or to refuse, whenever an appeal is made to the principle of benevolence. Their contributions are, therefore, both limited in degree, and defective in principle. They are called forth, rather by casual or by local circumstances, than by comprehensive views and christian motives. The wants which fall not under their actual inspection, they can scarcely be excited to supply; the miseries which are endured, beyond the limits of their own immediate vicinity, they can scarcely be induced to relieve. A few local charities circumscribe the sphere of their vision, and the sympathies of their hearts. How striking is the contrast between feelings such as theirs, and those which gave a character to the apostle of the Gentiles! In his heart, the kindest,

and the gentlest, and the tenderest feelings, towards individuals whom he loved, imposed no limits on the expansion of those sympathies, which embraced a world. His zeal for his brethren according to the flesh, ardently as it burned within him, consumed not one of all the energies of the soul, by which he was impelled from province to province, of the Asiatic and of the European Gentiles. His eagerness of noble daring, to encounter the champions of Grecian and of Roman philosophy, interfered not with the simplicity of his discourses, as "a teacher of babes,"—an instructor of the unlearned and the unwise. His solicitude for the interests of immortal souls, exposed to the wrath which cometh and abideth, on all that die in their sins, diminished not the benevolent earnestness of his applications for pecuniary aid, in favour of the "poor saints at Jerusalem." His deep anxiety for the conversion of sinners, enfeebled not the longings of his soul, for the growing knowledge and comfort and holiness of those, who had already believed through grace. Hear, in connexion with our text, the expressions of that paternal solicitude, which he cherished towards the disciples of Jesus, who were resident at the metropolis of the Roman empire. "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted, together with you, by the mutual faith, both of

you and me. Now, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that, oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto; that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

Now, with feelings thus excited, and with views thus expanded, should we contemplate the enterprises of christian benevolence, which are the glory of our age and of our country; and those institutions especially, which aim at the conversion of sinners abroad, and the conversion of sinners at home. There must surely be some dimness of intellectual vision, or some defect of compassionate feeling; either, if zeal for the success of foreign missions, indispose a person to take an interest in home-missions; or if zeal for the success of missions at home be allied with indifference towards the operations of missions abroad. The claims of both, although distinct, are most intimately connected. They take their rise from the same principles; they aim, substantially, at the same objects. They cannot be justly regarded as at variance; they are, in truth, in strict alliance. Most incorrect would it be, to invite you to contrast, but for a few moments I invite you to compare their respective claims, in order that you may be disposed

to do justice, both to the one and to the other ; and in order that the feeling of interest in your minds on behalf of the one, may lend its aid to my pleading on behalf of the other.

The incitements to promote the cause of *foreign missions*, arise out of such considerations as these :—the express command of him who is “ King of kings and Lord of lords ;” who has said in the tone of high and absolute command,—“ Go ye out unto all the world and preach the gospel to every creature :”—the vastness of a population, to be computed, not by hundreds nor by thousands nor by hundreds of thousands ; but by millions and by hundreds of millions, perishing for lack of knowledge, with “ a lie in their right hands” and enmity to the God of heaven ruling in their hearts :—the accumulation of an unpaid debt, which generation after generation has bequeathed to us, and which divine Providence has given to us, far more amply than to any former age, the means of attempting to discharge.

The incitements to promote the cause of *home missions*, arise out of claims not less valid and legitimate.

Consider the comprehensive, the ancient, the unrepcaled *command* which is the sum of six precepts of the decalogue :—“ thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” If, then, thou love not thy neighbour whom thou hast seen, or whom thou



mayest see, because he dwells within the limits of thine own sea-girt isle, how canst thou love thy neighbour whom thou hast not seen, who dwells in a far distant isle of a far distant ocean, or in a continent which thou knowest only by name.

Consider, also, the claims of *patriotism*. Owest thou not much to thy country? Had an ancient Roman, or an ancient Spartan, or an ancient Athenian, or even an ancient Hebrew, such cause to love his country and to labour for his country's good, as thou hast? Owest thou not much to the land which gave thee birth, which sustains thee by its produce, and attracts to its commercial shores the produce of every other land? Owest thou not much to the land of fertile fields and beauteous villages and thickly-peopled cities, in which no one maketh thee afraid? Owest thou not much to the land of equitable laws and paternal government, extending its protection—alike to its hereditary nobles, and princely merchants, and wealthy citizens, and flourishing manufacturers, and industrious mechanics, and thriving peasants? Owest thou not much to the land of bibles and of sanctuaries and of charities? To such a country what dost thou not owe? Is it enough, then, in payment of the debt, to meet the levied taxation and the parochial assessment, and the occasional demand of pressing exigency, on the part of the

poor and the sick and the friendless? Notwithstanding all that has been undertaken, and all that has been effected, in the enterprises of holy benevolence, are there not countrymen of thine, in numerous and populous districts, for whose precious and immortal souls no one cares, no one labours; into whose ears no one pours the glad tidings of Jesus and his salvation; for whose neglected children there is no kind instructor, to guide them into the way of peace and purity; to whom, when sick and afflicted, there is no one to pay the visit of mercy, or to speak of Him "who forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases, and redeemeth our lives from destruction, and crowneth us with loving kindness and tender mercies?" If, in such a land as this, to perish for lack of knowledge must be dreadful beyond description to the dying sinner, Oh, will not his blood be required at the hands of those who suffered him thus to perish, when the duty of imparting the knowledge of salvation was so imperious, and the facilities for the discharge of this duty were so completely within their reach! Oh, christians, British christians, shall your neighbour—shall your countrymen be left to perish in ignorance, within the very sphere of your observation and your intercourse and your secular activities? No oceans have you to traverse, no mountains have you to scale, no frontier of political demarcation have

you to pass, no foreign language have you to acquire, nothing that deserves the name of persecution have you to encounter, in order to convert the sinner, and to save the soul from death: how, then, can any pretext be found for neglecting the eternal interests of the thousands of your countrymen around you, living without Christ, and dying without hope? Ought it not to give to your heart the sincerest satisfaction and delight, that compassion for their exigencies has given origin to the society for which I now plead, and has added one, of no mean name, and no contracted views, and no sectarian character, to the effective institutions which aim at the salvation of the soul? Can you withhold your aid; can you refuse your contributions? "If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death and those that are ready to be slain; If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it; and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it; and shall not he render to every man according to his works?"

These considerations, then, may suffice, as a concise summary of the respective claims of home and of foreign missions. It may be easily conceived, that even among enlightened and zealous christians, there may be some whose mental habits render them more susceptible of impression, from the claims of the one of these grand objects, and

that there may be others whose characteristic feelings render them more susceptible of impression, from the other of these grand objects. Each of these classes may be thus disposed to contribute on a scale of noble liberality to the one of these objects; while, however, neither conscience nor feeling will permit the neglect of the other of these objects. Time and influence will be added to subscriptions for the one object, whilst pecuniary aid constitutes the chief support given to the other object. In this I discern nothing to excite surprise, nothing to demand vituperation. Under the unavoidable limitations of views and of energies within which beings, constituted as we are, live and move and act; good, rather than evil, may be the result of a division of labour, and a correspondent concentration of effort. That which appears to me to justify reprehension, is the conduct of those who regard, and who represent, the efforts which are made for the one of these objects, as a valid and sufficient reason for declining, altogether, or at least for postponing, till a distant day, the aid of the other object, so intimately related and so inexpressibly momentous.

I proceed, then, to my attempt to establish the SECOND PROPOSITION. It is, that *a practical regard to the claims of the one class of objects, is not to be postponed, till exertion and solicitude*

*cease to be necessary on behalf of the other class.*

If the views I have suggested be correct, then the claims, both of the one and of the other, are valid, unquestionable, absolute and independent. The debt, in each case, is proved. The debt should be forthwith paid. On the supposition, then, of a debt being due to two distinct parties; could any one be so infatuated as to imagine, that the payment of the one creditor would satisfy the demands of the other creditor? It is perfectly right, that the one should be paid; but it is equally right, and equally necessary, that the other also should be paid. The one claimant may be satisfied; but the other claimant must also be satisfied. The apostle acknowledged a debt to the Greek; and never would he have imagined the debt to be paid, by any services rendered to the barbarian. He acknowledged a debt to the barbarian; and never would he have imagined any part of that debt to be paid, by services rendered to the Greek. We owe a debt to our unenlightened countrymen at home; let us not imagine that the debt can be, in the smallest degree, liquidated, by sending missionaries to the distant heathen of Asia and of Africa. We owe a debt to the pagan tribes of every land on the face of the earth; let us not imagine, that any part of that debt can be liquidated, by the sending forth

of missionaries at home. The one ought we, most certainly, to do, but the other, it is equally certain, we ought not to leave undone. The neglect of either will be regarded by Him who has said—“Occupy till I come,” as a misimprovement of our talents, a dereliction of our duty, and a criminal neglect of souls immortal!

There is one method of attempting, summarily and easily, to meet the double demand and to liquidate the debt of both. It is by the establishment of a general fund on the part of a christian congregation, or more extended society, to embrace the objects both of home and foreign missions, and, perhaps, not of these alone; and by the allotment of a certain proportion of the amount of the subscriptions, to the support of each. In this case, the payment of one single subscription, on the part of each member, is regarded as a contribution to each of the objects, which appeal to his heart. But let me be permitted to ask, is this the payment to each of the full amount of the actual and acknowledged debt? Is the usual amount of such subscriptions on a scale adequate to the full payment of the debt; or is it, in ordinary cases, more than ought to be given to each of the objects taken separately? If this be the case; then instead of paying the whole of the debt, what is there paid but a small proportion of the debt? Shall I offer any violence to feeling, or to taste, or to the dignity

of the subject, if I say, that instead of discharging the debt, they only make a composition with their creditors, and pay an inconsiderable dividend, instead of the full amount!

Against a general fund of one description, there is, indeed, no principle to be advanced; on the contrary, every principle in the economy of religious benevolence pleads for its establishment. A new and a nobler scale of contribution might be anticipated, throughout our churches, were every individual to set apart, for the cause of Christ and of his fellow-men, such a proportion of his income as, in his best judgment, aided by the emotions of a susceptible conscience, he may deem most accordant, at once with his duty to his God and his duty to his family. That fund he will regard as no longer his own, but as sacred and devoted; so that when an appeal is made to his benevolence, a very short and simple process of inquiry may conduct him to the right decision. The first question will be—Does the object deserve support? If so, the second will be—Does it come within the range which the providence of God appears to have marked out, as the sphere of my beneficence? If so, the third question will be—What is the amount which, in this instance, it is right for me to give?

In the economy of benevolence, there are two prevailing defects. The first and the greatest of

these is, the deficiency in the amount of the sum total, given by individual christians. How few, comparatively, devote to the purposes of religion and benevolence, a tenth of their annual income! Yet, if this be a proportion which, in the middle classes of society, might be justly considered, as the *minimum* of contribution, how many are there throughout our country, and especially in our great metropolis, who ought, unquestionably, to give in a ratio higher by far! May it not be assumed, as a principle scarcely requiring proof, that the greater the income, the greater should be the proportion of income appropriated to the purposes of benevolence? If it be right that he who has an income of one thousand pounds per annum, should give a tenth, then he who has two thousand pounds per annum, should give more than a tenth, because he has a larger surplus at his disposal, after making the requisite provision for his family. He who, with an income of five hundred pounds, gives away a tenth, gives, in the sight of God, on a nobler scale than he who, with a thousand pounds, gives away a tenth; and he who, with an income of only one hundred pounds, gives away a tenth, gives, in the sight of God, on a proportionally nobler scale; for he gives at the expense of many a personal and domestic sacrifice, to which the man of affluence makes not the least approach. When shall principles, so obvious



and so important, be acted upon throughout the christian world!

The other great defect to which I referred is, the want of discrimination in comparing together the respective claims of the objects which solicit support. A charity school, for example, in which twenty children are educated, may claim and justly claim your aid. But is it entitled to a contribution, equal in amount to that which is due to societies for sending forth missionaries, throughout the unenlightened population of our country at large, or for sending forth missionaries throughout the dark and doleful regions of the pagan world, which are filled with the habitations of cruelty? We sometimes hear eloquent eulogiums on the liberality displayed in the amount of the contributions to our bible and our missionary societies. Can we discern, in such amounts, occasions of entire satisfaction? They may be great, when compared with the inconsiderable contributions of years and ages that are past; but are they not the reverse of great and splendid and noble, when compared with the magnitude of the objects—the urgency of the claims—the resources in the possession of christians themselves, or even the more ample donations of the idolaters of the east, in support of their system of lying vanities? What a spirit-stirring consideration is the fact of which we have been recently assured, that much

more than the total sum contributed throughout Great Britain, during the past year, for the circulation of bibles, and the support of missions, is annually contributed in the city of Calcutta alone, in support of the system of vile and abominable idolatry!

Rapidly diminishing, I trust, is the number of those who reiterate the question equally at variance with the spirit of the gospel, and with the conduct of its most illustrious Apostle — Why should we send missionaries to the heathen abroad, when we have multitudes almost as ignorant as the heathen at home? Had the Apostle Paul acted on the principle which such persons are disposed to patronize, would there have been a church at Ephesus, or an epistle such as that which thence derives its name, replete with divine sublimity? Or would there have been a church at Thessalonica, or the epistles primarily intended for its benefit, rich in all that is consolatory, and in all that is exciting to the work of faith, and the labour of love? Or would there have been a church at Corinth, with its epistles so profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness? And if in the ages which followed, other christians had acted on the principle of restricting their attention to the heathen at home, what would Europe now have been; what would Britain now have been;

what would have been the circumstances of the very men who would circumscribe our tender mercies, by the rocks and the sands of our own native shore?

Why should not the operations of missionaries abroad, be contemporaneous with the exertions of missionaries at home? Do they not actually render to each other mutual and valuable aid? Will not facilities for doing good arise out of the combination of efforts, to meet at once the claims, both of those who are more nearly, and of those who are more remotely related to us? In order that, on these questions, the affirmative may be not only asserted, but substantiated, I proceed to the

THIRD PROPOSITION. *It is, that by due attention to the claims of the one class, we at the same time promote the interests of the other class.*

Let me first invite you to consider the benefits which foreign missions have already conferred upon our own countrymen.

Did not missionary associations first cultivate among us that holy and benignant and brotherly spirit, which now so happily unites christians and churches of various orders, in the same grand schemes of evangelical enterprise?

Have not missionaries, in foreign stations, and especially in British colonies and dependencies, been the honoured instruments of converting

many of their countrymen, who left their native land deplorably destitute, even of the first principles, of the religion of Jesus?

Did not the spirit of holy zeal in the cause of the heathen enkindle, from the very first, in various provinces of our country, a benevolent ardour to diffuse the knowledge of Christ through our own unenlightened villages; and is not the origin of many of our own county associations and itinerant societies, which have rendered invaluable services to our native land, to be traced to the previous excitement of commiseration on behalf of the pagan tribes? Let me be permitted further to ask—would the Home Missionary Society have had existence in its present form, or *with its present name*, or with its present funds, had it not been for the spirit previously awakened by the success of foreign missions? Would the designation thus happily given it, have proved so conducive to its interests, but for the *missionary excitability* so powerfully produced by zeal for the perishing heathen?

Let me now direct your views to the benefits which *home* missions give the promise of conferring, and are actually beginning to confer, on societies for the propagation of the gospel *throughout the world*.

Is not the grand and primary object of the Home Missionary Society the conversion of the

sinner from the error of his way? And is there an instance in which, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, this has been effected, without adding one to the number of the friends of foreign missions;—one who is disposed to offer earnest prayer for the conversion of the world which lieth in wickedness; as well as to offer some contribution, if circumstances permit, to the extension of the kingdom of Christ?

How often, in our religious assemblies, have we presented that admirable prayer, which many centuries before the advent of our Saviour, was poured forth by the ancient Church; “God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us: that thy way may be known upon earth; thy saving health unto all people!” Thus have we in effect said, in our approach to him who heareth prayer: “Let thy blessing rest upon ourselves; let it rest upon our families; let it rest upon our churches; let it rest upon our country, in all its cities and towns and villages and hamlets; in order that through us individually and collectively, thy salvation may be extended to others, even to the earth’s remotest bounds.” And is there, upon the face of the earth, a people who have so much encouragement as we have to offer such a prayer? From the day on which the ascending Saviour gave his commission to the Apostles, has there

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ever been a nation possessing resources so ample for the accomplishment of the object for which we pray? Think of the intercourse opened by our country with every clime and with every shore. Think of the territory and the population subject to the British crown. Think of the ascendancy acquired by our commerce, our laws, our arts and our arms. Think of the pecuniary means, in the possession of those who love their Saviour, and who love their species; and with all these considerations distinctly in view adopt, with fervour and with perseverance, the Psalmist's prayer.

Are you duly attempting then, my christian friends, to discharge the debt which you owe to your country? Do you not owe to your native land, as many preachers of the everlasting gospel—as many teachers of the uninstructed, as its destitute villages and hamlets require? Ever keep in mind, also, the extent of obligation under which you are laid, to consult the glory and to accomplish the pleasure of him whose you are, and whom you serve. Does not your Lord and Master look with complacency on exertions such as those, in which you are now invited to take an active part? Let me read to you his own words, on an occasion which might be regarded, as the origin of the first Home Missionary Society which was ever established in the world. It was when the twelve apostles were the missionaries,

and the sphere allotted for exertion was the land of Israel. "He that receiveth you," said the Saviour, "receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man, shall receive a righteous man's reward." Let us send forth then, righteous men, whom we regard as divinely qualified teachers of the doctrine of the cross; who themselves understand, and are prepared to shew to others, the way of salvation; who love their Saviour, and love the souls of their fellow-men; who are willing to expend their energies of mind and of body even to exhaustion, in the work of turning men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God; and whose entire dependence for success is on the promised influences of the Holy Spirit. For our encouragement, let us remember, that the Saviour has pronounced a benediction on those who cordially receive them. If they receive them in Christ's name and for his sake, they shall be honoured, even as if they had received the Saviour himself to their house and to their heart. Receiving thus a righteous man, they shall participate in his recompense of honour and glory and joy; receiving thus a missionary, they shall share in the reward which belongs to the missionary

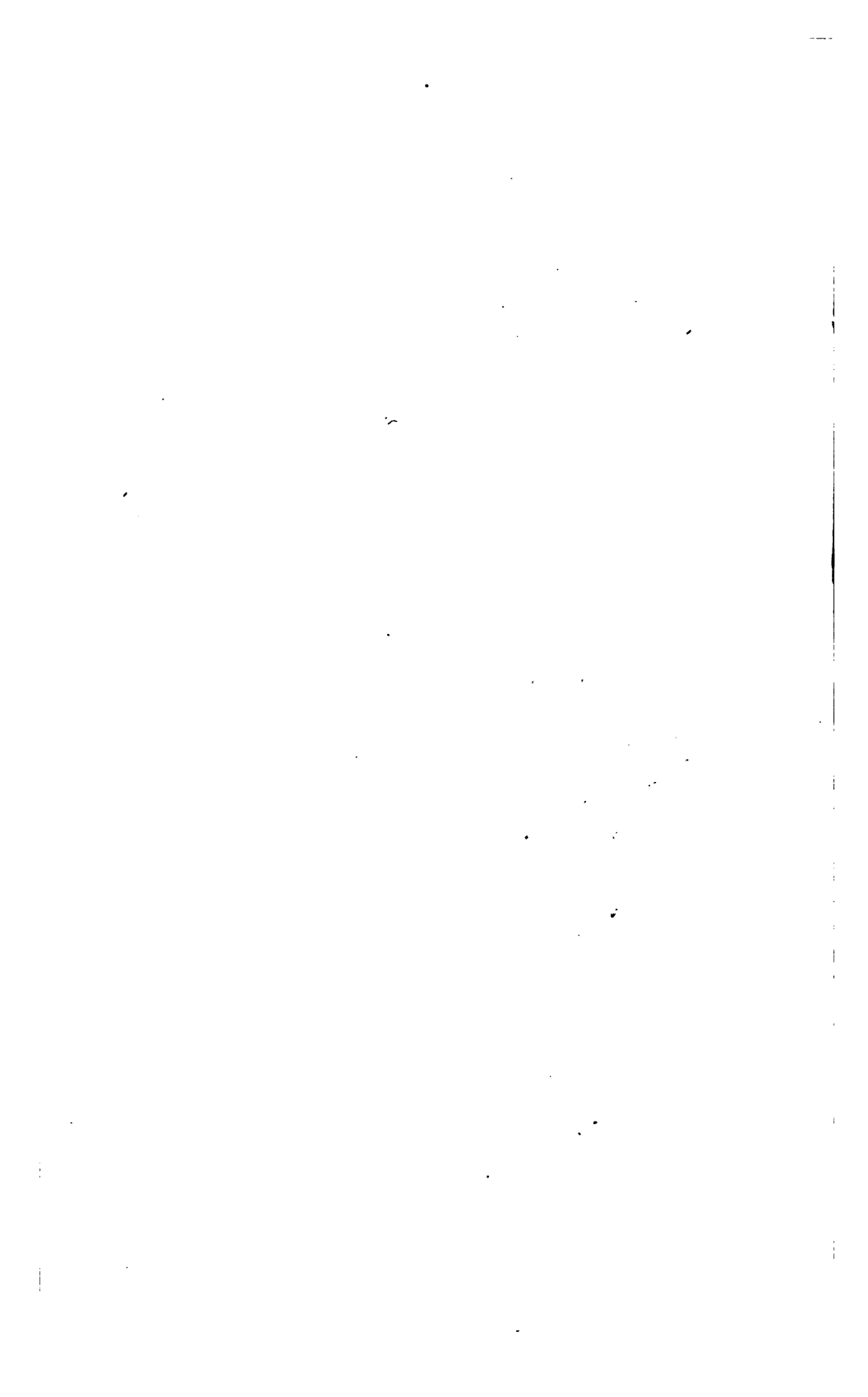
himself. What then shall be said of the honourable and joyous distinction of those who *send them forth*, and who provide for their support on these missions of mercy? "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." It is, then, still more blessed to *send* than to *receive* the preachers of the cross, the herakds of salvation. Connect, then, the exertions which you are now urged to redouble, with the disclosures of the day when the Lord Jesus shall appear in his glory; when he shall confer on his devoted servants his promised "recompense of reward;" and when they who have turned many to righteousness, shall shine with the splendour of the firmament, for ever and for ever!

If on this occasion I have been speaking in the presence of an individual, who feels not a sense of obligation to the Saviour and to his fellow-men, I must, of necessity, conclude, that he feels no sense of what is owing to his own never-dying soul. "He that sinneth against me," saith the God of love, "wrongeth his own soul." Oh, what fearful injustice art thou doing to the noble energies and susceptibilities of thine immortal soul, whilst neglecting the great salvation! What would it profit thee, wert thou to gain the whole world, and lose thine own soul? Salvation is now brought near thee; let me beseech



thee, then, most earnestly, not, by thine own desperate act, to put far away from thee the blessings of life eternal. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." If that salvation be now rejected, will it not be incomparably worse for thee at "the day of wrath," than for those to whom it never was announced? If it be not "the savour of life unto life," it will assuredly prove "the savour of death unto death." Life and death are set before thee—"lay hold then on eternal life." And "this is life eternal, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." Be it then thy chief solicitude, to "know Christ, and to be found in him," at the day of his appearing. "The Lord grant that thou mayest find mercy of the Lord at that day!"

FINIS.



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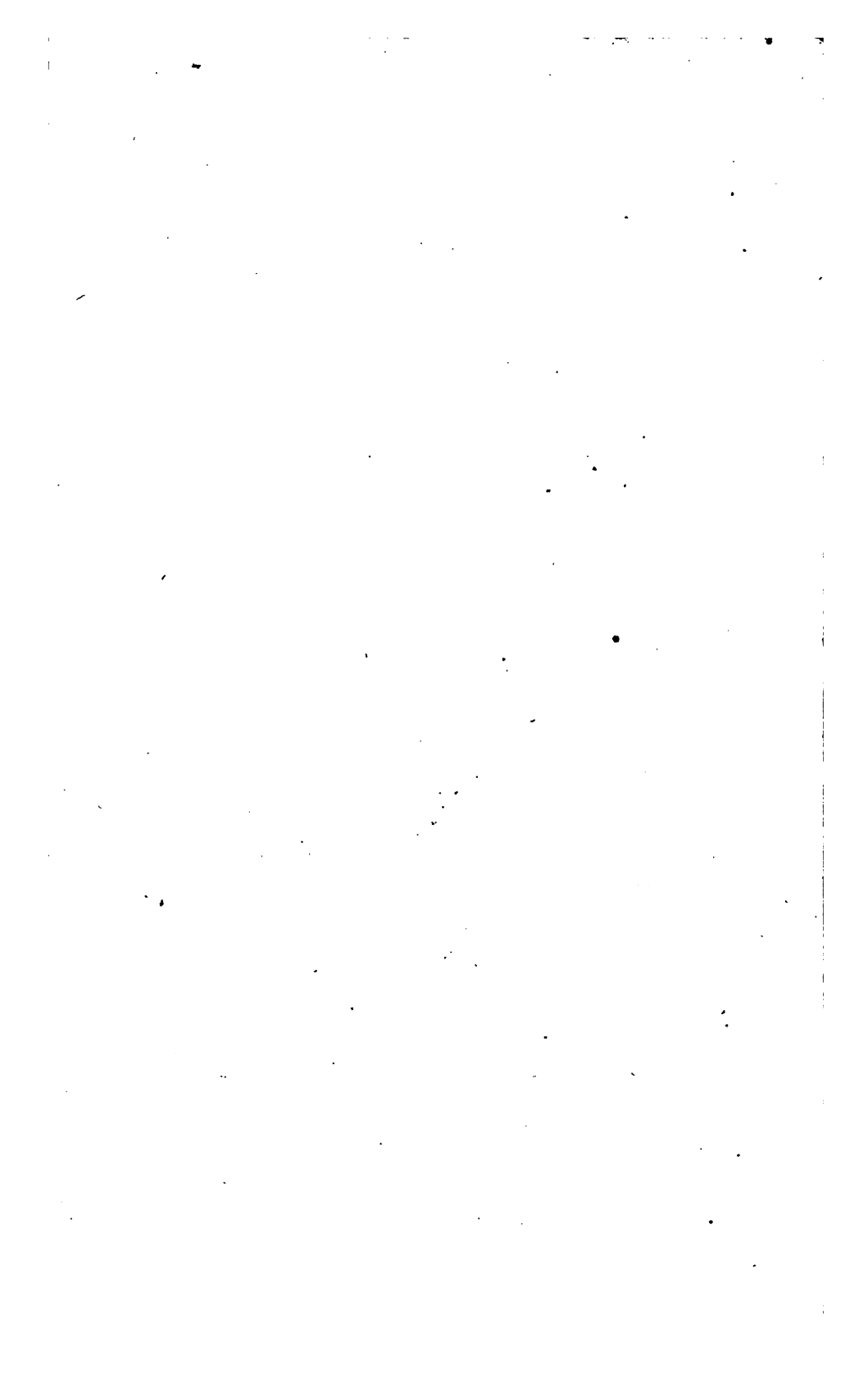
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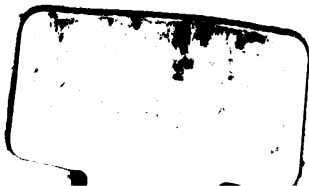
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